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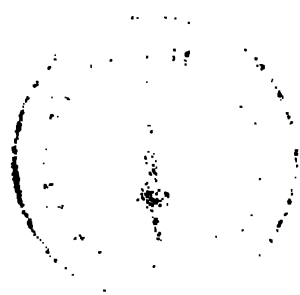
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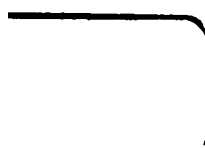
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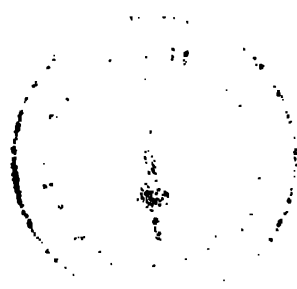
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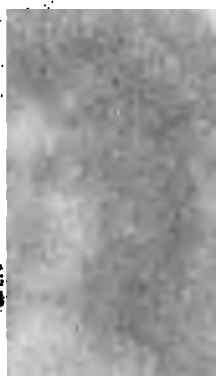






Very truly,
Geneva G. Fairfield.

Vingut, Gertrude Fairfield



Vingut, Gertrude Fairfield

IRENE;

OR,

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

OF AN

ARTIST'S DAUGHTER.

AND OTHER TALES.

BOSTON :

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THE

VICE PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER.

BY

MISS G. G. FAIRFIELD.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1852, by
GENEVIERE GENEVRA FAIRFIELD,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Eastern
District of Pennsylvania.

TO

EUGENE SUE,

THE GREATEST OF LIVING AUTHORS

AND THE MOST ELEGANT MAN OF HIS TIME,

BY ONE OF THE MOST ARDENT OF HIS ADMIRERS,

THIS WORK IS DEDICATED BY THE AUTHORESS,

GENEVEIVE GENEVRA FAIRFIELD.

LETTER FROM EUGENE SUE TO MISS FAIRFIELD.

MADemoisELLE :—

Je serai tres heureuse et tres flatte d'accepter la dedicase d'une Livre que vous me faites l'honneur, de me proposer : il sera, croyez le bien, une des plus precieuses recompenses des mes travaux qui on eu le bonheur de meriter votre interet, et celui des vos honorables compatriots des Etats Unis.

Vraiment, Mademoiselle,

PARIS, 27 Juillet, 1852.

EUGENE SUE.

TRANSLATED.

Miss :— I shall be happy and very much flattered to accept the dedication of the book which you have done me the honor to propose to me : it will be, believe me, one of the most precious recompenses of my labors, which has the happiness to merit your interest, and that of your honorable compatriots of the United States.

Truly, Miss,

PARIS, 27th July, 1852.

EUGENE SUE.

THE

VICE-PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE BALL.

THE new administration had just come into power. All was anticipation, disappointment, life, hope, excitement, and confusion at Washington. Office-seekers came and went. The Cabinet held agitated councils. The Senate argued. The House quarreled. Women flirted, and gossipped, and gave parties. With one of the latter will I open this tale, in the year of our Lord 18—, at the house of the lovely Chilian Ambassadors, Madame C. This distinguished and accomplished lady, on the night of which I speak, gave a brilliant entertainment, to which came the chiefs of the new Cabinet, numerous Members and Senators, and several distinguished foreign noblemen.

The scene was bright and illusive. The gay dresses, floating plumes, and expressive faces, mingled amid the court uniforms, the simple American civilian dress, and the foreign faces, contrasted strangely with the pale American physiognomy and less easy grace of our countrymen.

While Madame and her husband dispensed bows and smiles with urbanity and grace, and their interesting daughter, M^{lle} Eliza, performed a fine overture on the piano

forte, a group of young men, standing by the fire-place, appeared to be criticising the guests. One or two had eye-glasses conspicuously placed before their eyes. It was a party of four. The two foremost were evidently Americans, but the two who stood behind, partly in shadow, from their peculiar air and stately manner, one might suppose were Englishmen. One of these two first was tall and dark, a man of imperious presence. His large, flashing eyes, aquiline nose, his delicate, firm lips, and decided air betokened one born to command. With a look half interested, half contemptuous, he contemplated the scene before him. His companion, to whom, from time to time, he addressed some remark, was much smaller. His features were less regular, less strongly marked than were the other's; his appearance was lighter, less commanding; there was more of the ball-room beau about him. These two and the two before them were engaged in earnest conversation.

"They tell me," said the handsome stranger, speaking to his companion at his side, "that the Vice-President is here to-night; can you point him out to me?"

"The Vice-President," responded the person addressed; "let me see, I thought I saw him a moment ago speaking to our lady hostess. Oh, there he is, and his daughter, too, reclining on his arm, and her superb cousin following her. They are coming this way; shall I introduce you? Miss Ariadne Kedar is a splendid beauty, and the Vice-President's daughter is very intellectual."

As he spoke, a tall, robust man, with a determined, sagacious expression of countenance, upon whose arm leaned a tall, intellectual looking woman, a blonde in appearance, with blue eyes and fair hair, attired in white dress, came walking past them. A little behind, not exactly on the other arm, (for both her's were folded before her,) but near enough to

show she was in their company, came gliding a being so beautiful that all, in gazing on her, might almost imagine they looked on a creature of another sphere.

She was tall—perhaps five feet four or five—perfectly rounded were her lovely neck and arms, and white as marble. Her hair was golden brown, her eyes celestial blue, and their gaze seemed beaming with love and tenderness.

Her fine chiseled mouth, its lips thin and of a red color, the transparent whiteness of her complexion, gave to this beautiful woman an air of magnificence. She wore a simple robe of white silk, made with severe simplicity, and a lace scarf partly concealed her neck and arms. Her beautiful hair fell in long curls to her bosom, and on her head was placed a wreath of scarlet cypress. The bright hues of the flowers gave an air of brightness to the otherwise external simplicity of her costume. As she passed, a murmur of admiration followed her.

As this party was passing the group of gentlemen, the Vice-President was surrounded immediately by numberless persons, all paying compliments, shaking hands, etc., and, in consequence of the crowd, he was obliged to pause, and the ladies also, so that the strangers had a full view of them. The two young ladies stood quietly by the Vice-President's side, occasionally bowing to an acquaintance, or smiling at some remark made to them. The Vice-President's daughter seemed somewhat shy, and appeared to reply with an effort to the courtesy extended to her; but the beautiful cousin, with her bold, gay face, answered, with bursts of laughter, the sallies of her admirers.

"Flewelin," said the handsome stranger, still looking at the two girls, "pray present me to them, if you are sufficiently well acquainted to do so;" and the young gentleman stepped forward by the other, whom he presented as Lord

Falmouth. The gentlemen bowed profoundly to both of them, and as his friend had already secured a position by the beauty, he began conversing with the Vice-President's daughter. They had scarcely exchanged the usual compliments of the evening before the music ceased, and there was a general movement to secure places for the quadrille. Ariadne Kedar had already moved away on the arm of Mr. Flewellin, and although Lord Falmouth in reality would rather have danced with her, yet, seeing she was engaged, he offered his arm to the shy girl at his side, and they moved forward to find a vis-a-vis. Chance placed them opposite the young daughter of the Ministress, who, dressed in rose-colored satin and a white wreath, was gaily talking to her father. The two ladies bowed to each other as they took their places.

"You have not been long in our country, I believe," timidly observed Alexanderina, venturing to glance up at the face of her partner.

"No; not long; a month, I believe, since I arrived here."

"I recollect hearing papa say that he had seen you," began the Vice-President's daughter; but they were interrupted by the music, and all commenced dancing.

Alexanderina did not dance very well; her form was not so sylph-like, nor her movements so graceful as her cousin's; yet there was an unconscious charm about her very exterior, and it was that of the most unaffected sincerity and simplicity. Her open, candid face, with its large blue eyes, and raven hair plainly smoothed over her pale cheeks, and her tall, light form, which swayed gently like a young willow tree. Although not beautiful, yet he found her so mild, so intelligent, so interesting, that before the dance was finished, Lord Falmouth found himself insensibly becoming delighted with the Vice-President's daughter.

As he led her to a seat, her cousin also came up at the moment, and Alexanderina introduced them to each other.

"We have a gay party this evening, sir," said Ariadne Kedar, fixing her bold, beautiful eyes full on his face as she spoke, and he felt almost fascinated by their liquid fire. "I saw you dancing in the next set to us just now with Alexanderina. I love dancing very much, but really it is so warm I must leave you and go toward the windows yonder, where I think it is cooler. Good evening, sir;" and bowing and smiling sweetly the fair beauty took Col. Flewellin's arm, and they disappeared in the crowd.

Lord Falmouth followed her with his eyes till she was gone; then seating himself by Miss Kedar's side, he was still conversing with her, when her father came forward and presented a gentleman who claimed her hand for the next dance. Lord Falmouth rose and resigned his place to the new comer, after the Vice-President had assured and re-assured him that he was delighted with the honor of his acquaintance, and hoped to have the pleasure of seeing him at his house. To this cordial invitation the young gentleman gracefully responded; and then bidding the young lady good evening, turned away.

He had not proceeded many steps ere he was stopped by his friend Flewellin, and the other two of whom I have spoken, who were attached to the legation.

"Well, my friend, how do you like the two Miss Kedars?" was the united exclamation.

"I am pleased with both," was the quiet reply. "One is very beautiful, and the other is interesting."

"There are several other beauties in the room this evening; don't you want to be introduced? They have all heard of you: they are all longing to have an introduction to you."

"I beg you to excuse me this evening; I really have exhausted my energy and all my agreeableness. I intend going home now. Let me see the hour;" and he drew from his pocket a tiny gold watch, and glancing at it, said, "Eleven o'clock; I am tired of this. Come, Flewellin, don't you want to go back with me to the hotel?—I am going."

"Yes; if you say so;" and they left the gay room, after bidding Madame C—— good evening.

Soon after the Vice-President and his two fair charges also departed. Both had danced; both had been admired—the one mentally the other physically: yet as they drove home in their landeau, both silent from the effort at display which a ball always calls forth. Both thought of one alone; and that one was—Lord Falmouth.

CHAPTER II.

THE COUSINS.

ALEXANDERINA and Ariadne Kedar were cousins. Their fathers were brothers. They had begun life poor and friendless; but by prudence, perseverance and economy, joined to worldly tact and *finesse*, had risen to their present position: the one as Vice-President, the other as Senator. Both were strong-minded, sagacious men; both had married, in early life, plain, sensible women, by whom they had several children. Alexanderina and Ariadne were the eldest of these children. Ariadne was a year older than her cousin. They were as different in their characters as in their names. Ariadne was marvelously beautiful, subtle, adroit, talented, and vain. Alexanderina scarcely showed what she was at first; yet she possessed the finest principles, the most elevated soul, the kindest heart, and most enduring affections. Her mother, who had been in infirm health for many years, adored the gentle nurse who attended her with such loving care. Her father, proud of his daughter's abilities and finished education, took delight in showing her off to his friends on all occasions; and, as if he could foresee the future, predicted years of happiness and wealth in store for her.

The mother of Ariadne loved the gay world as well as her daughter did, but never having been educated in that class of society, she neither appeared at ease herself, nor made others feel so, and gradually becoming tired of that in which she could not excel, she generally stayed at home, and allowed her beautiful daughter to go alone, with her father or uncle,

to all the gay parties, and dinners, and balls of the capital of our country.

In winter, both families dwelt in town, in handsome houses at the West End, but in the beautiful summer time each of the Messrs. Kedar had a Gothic Villa, a few miles from Washington, on the beautiful shores of the Potomac. That of the Vice-President was called Paradise, while to Wm. Kedar's they gave the name of Doux Repos. To these elegant country seats Alexanderina and Ariadne came, and passed one or two months; and it was to her mother's home, at the Doux Repos, that Ariadne immediately went after the party at the Chilian Ambassadors'. Her mother was suddenly taken sick, and sent post-haste for her favorite child to come to her. Madame C——'s had been the last entertainment of a brilliant season, through which Ariadne had shone the brightest star of all; and fagged with dissipation, tired even of the admiration her appearance everywhere excited, Ariadne gladly obeyed the summons, and left the city to join her mother on the shores of those sweet waters.

It was the last of May; the season had been unusually brilliant, both in balls and political affairs. Plots and counter plots, intrigues and counter intrigues had flourished all winter. Some had been successful, some not; and now, the last month of Spring found the town and its inhabitants completely tired from all these causes.

The Vice-President's wife had been anticipating her speedy removal to the Villa, but a heavy cold, caught from indiscreet exposure, had again confined her in her room, and Alexanderina remained in town to watch her beloved mother, and take care of the younger children.

A week after the ball, Alexanderina sat in her mother's room, by her bedside, teaching one of her young sisters her spelling lesson. Alexanderina did not resemble her mother,

who was of darker complexion, and eyes, and hair than her daughter; yet there was something in the air and manner that was so alike in both, for both were elegant and patrician.

Mrs. Kedar was muffled up in shawls, and sat in bed, reading. It was near twilight. Few towns in our country are favored with lovelier sunsets than Washington, where you often see the sky a mass of blue and gold, tinged with crimson, and its hues are reflected upon those beautiful waters, till they seem animated with the light of another world. Beautiful, beautiful Washington! On this evening the sky was so, and presently Mrs. Kedar forgot her book and fell into a reverie, as she looked from the window on the scene. The lisping tones of the child were the only sounds of the hour, and the ticking of the clock, as it moved to and fro.

"Allie, my dear," suddenly said the mother, "that gentleman, Lord Falmouth, to whom you was introduced, has not yet called on us, and it is a week since the party. I should like to see him. I wish he would come. How I wish some such man might fall in love with you, my love, and marry you. Do you know I have such dreams, and particularly often since I have been in such bad health. I greatly fear I shall not be with you long; and to leave you alone with your father! He is fond of you, though he could not pay you that attention I have always done, so that I feel doubly anxious about you."

Alexanderina, who, at the beginning of her mother's speech, had blushed slightly at the mention of Lord Falmouth, calmly replied:

"Dear mamma, I fear those are day-dreams, castles in the air, that will prove only empty mist. English noblemen seldom marry out of their own rank, and even if they did so, no one of them would be likely to admire me much, for you know I am not very handsome, and Englishmen, I think, are

almost entirely influenced by their eyes. Don't think about the future; let it take care of itself: and above all things, don't despond about your health. You will be better soon, I trust."

I hope so, darling, for your sake, not for my own, for I am no longer young. It matters not for me, but I wish to retain life to advise and love my good child; but whether I live or die, I want to see you well married; for single life, for a woman, is odious in my opinion. It is so solitary, so unloving."

"I have always had a presentiment that I should never marry, and I think so now," said Alexanderina, thoughtfully.

"Why! how strange, my daughter. What put that idea into your head?" asked the mother in alarm.

"I don't know, I can't tell you or myself; but so it is. I think that Ariadne will marry, and that very soon; but as for myself, I doubt."

"You think Ariadne, who is not half as talented, half as good nor amiable as you are, will be married first. Nonsense, that depends upon yourself, my love. You are too timid, I fear. You don't show what you are, except upon an intimate acquaintance. You should be bolder, more showy."

"No, no, dear mamma," answered the daughter, with a smile at her mother's enthusiasm; let me be as I am. I shall do well enough; those who love me will love me as I am; and as for others, they certainly have a right to their fancies as well as myself. I spoke only of my presentiment; it may be all nonsense, though. Don't let it disturb you; let us speak of something else. I was about to say that I wonder I had not heard from Ariadne since she left. She has had time enough for a letter to reach me."

I really don't care much myself if I never see your cousin again, unless she could be entirely altered; for I know Ari-

adue to possess, notwithstanding all her beauty, a wicked, perfidious heart."

"Oh, mamma, don't speak so," interposed her daughter.

"Yes, I will say it, Allie, for I know it to be true. Notwithstanding your uniform kindness to your cousin, if she could, at any moment, in any way interfere with you, even at the sacrifice of your peace of mind, she would not hesitate to do it. She neither loves you, nor even her own parents, nor anything half as well as herself."

"Oh, mamma, that is saying too much; you are too severe, indeed. Remember that she has been much spoiled by her mother; and that mother is a silly woman, not a wise woman, like you, who knows how to instruct her children. Ariadne is vain, too. She loves admiration; and the gay world, perhaps, has spoiled her somewhat; but indeed you do go too far when you speak so."

"No, I do not. I am a woman of observation. I know the world," was the mother's reply.

And Alexanderina had finished giving the child her lesson, and was smoothing her hair at her mother's mirror, when her servant entered, with a visiting card on a salver. The young lady glanced at it, and turned, with a joyous expression, to her mother.

Lord Falmouth had called.

"I will be down immediately, tell the gentleman," said she. "Mamma, cannot you also come? I should like to introduce you to him. He is a splendid gentleman."

"No, my love, I cannot rise to-night. I am too ill. Give my compliments to him. I wish he had called to-morrow; I might have been well enough to go down stairs. But no matter; some other time will do as well.

She closed her eyes, and laid her head on the pillow, but immediately unclosed them, and with the desire that every

mother feels, that her daughter should look well, said to Alexanderina :

"My dear, I want you to look well; what dress have you on?"

"My blue silk, mamma, with white satin bow."

"Have you anything on your head? I cannot see, it is so dark."

"Only my Lama head-dress."

"Oh, that will do; make haste, my dear, the gentleman is waiting." And Alexanderina disappeared.

CHAPTER III.

LORD FALMOUTH.

THE lamps were already lit in the two large drawing-rooms, and the lady found her visitor seated near one of them, looking at a book, when she entered. Perhaps she was more becomingly dressed, or it may be that anticipation sent a brighter flush to her cheeks than usually dwelt there, for the gentleman looked at her admiringly, as she came towards him. He had been haunted since the night of the party, by the recollection of Ariadne. Her beautiful face and form were constantly before him. In paying this visit, he probably expected to see her also; but as the Vice-President's daughter saluted him timidly, yet gracefully, he thought her almost as lovely as her cousin.

At first she felt rather timid and seemed afraid to talk, (which, of course, did not display her accomplishments to advantage,) but the practiced man of the world was used to courts and councils; to women of the gay world, and to those of unassuming, quiet merit, he was equally accustomed. With fine tact, he drew the gentle girl into conversation, and gradually forgetting her diffidence, Alexanderina became animated and fluent, and to the surprise of herself and Lord Falmouth, an hour passed away and found them still conversing. When he rose to take leave, he spoke, for the first time since his entrance, of Ariadne.

"My cousin has gone to spend the summer at her father's country-seat, fifty miles from here," said Miss Kedar.

"Ah! do you spend your summers in the country? Washington seems like the country to me," said his Lordship.

"Yes; we always have done so till now. But my mother has been too sick to be removed from home, consequently I stay with her."

And after the usual expressions of leave-taking, Lord Falmouth went away.

Alexanderina, her cheeks bright crimson, her eyes dancing with delight, returned to her mother's room, where she found her father, and detailed all the conversation of her charming visitor. Both parents listened to her with fixed attention, for the worldly Vice-President, perhaps, imagined that his sweet daughter might win the Peer to closer ties than mere friendship; and a family alliance with so distinguished a man, would much advance his foreign relations. He made no remark, however, by which these thoughts might be divined, and soon began talking to his wife about the cabinet difficulties, and their affairs, on which he often consulted her, she being a woman of superior judgment.

If Mrs. Kedar was pleased at Lord Falmouth having called, she was still more so, when, some days after the visit, he came, with two beautiful horses, and took Alexanderina out riding on the Georgetown road. On this occasion Miss Kedar wore a fawn-colored habit, in Hussar style, with a hat and feathers. She rode well, and looked well; her fond mother watched her as she rode away.

This was a delightful ride to Alexanderina, and, when years after, fancy recalled the scene, memory always revived the feelings she experienced then. Lord Falmouth was more and more pleased the better he became acquainted with her. He discovered so many fine qualities, such exquisite sensibility, so different from the mawkish sentimentality of most

young girls, that insensibly, his heart becoming interested through his mind, he began to ask himself if he were not in love with her.

And so a month glided away, while he became a regular visitor twice or three times a week, and he rode, drove, and visited often with Mrs. and Miss Kedar. Of all the foreigners in town, he was most sought and most admired; all the ladies desired to secure him to escort their daughters; all the fathers were anxious to make his acquaintance, that they might say they had the honor of knowing so distinguished a man.

Lord Falmouth was too perfect a gentleman to think he honored people by extending to them those civilities we all owe to each other. He was well-bred and uniformly polite because it was his nature—because he was born with those fine feelings which make a gentleman. The eager avidity with which they ran after him rather amused than otherwise; and the heartless admiration with which the young girls listened to the simplest things he said, as if his mouth distilled pearls and diamonds, frequently made him laugh. Alexanderina Kedar showed none of this folly; in fact, she was too proud. She thought too much of her own qualities to cringe obsequiously to any one; and it was this independence in herself and cousin that first interested him toward them. He admired her fine qualities, and that admiration gradually deepened into love. He could not but perceive the impression he had made upon her fancy when they first met; it was too evident to be concealed, and time only deepened that love at first-sight—only made it a part of her very life.

Ariadne had been quite a month at Doux Repos, but she often wrote her cousin letters describing the scenery in the country, her mother's health, and how they lived at the

villa. To these letters Alexanderina always replied, and she mentioned everything except that she should first have told—that is, her attachment to Lord Falmouth. But as his image became fixed in her heart, she felt reluctant to either speak of him herself, or hear others do so, and this strange feeling of shame she experienced even when alone. She often blushed at her own thoughts, and then asked herself why she did so, since to love is the law of our being, and, so far from suggesting feelings of shame, it should chasten the mind.

When July arrived, Mrs. Kedar, whose health had revived a little, declared her intention of going to Paradise during the hot months of summer; and, although Alexanderina feared that her mother's health was too delicate to bear the journey, yet Mrs. Kedar insisted so strongly on going that the daughter and husband acquiesced, and the whole household immediately began packing up to go. Alexanderina feared they should but seldom see Lord Falmouth there, as it was fifty miles away, (ten miles from Ariadne's father's,) and, being situated in a lovely part of the country, near the river shore, would not be a very inviting spot for his travel; but all these objections were obviated, when, on being asked to spend a month with them, he consented willingly, and the whole party started together. The Vice-President remained in town alone, his official duties preventing him from leaving the city an hour.

They journeyed to the villa in their own carriage. The scenery along the way was charming; and Alexanderina knew many old Indian legends with which she beguiled the hours away. Mrs. Kedar said not much, but, enveloped in her cashmere, listened to her daughter and Lord Falmouth, and, charmed with her companion, I dare say the young lady regretted not her mamma's silence.

On the evening of the day they started, they reached their sylvan home. The villa stood on the edge of the shore; a long avenue of beech trees lead to it, and the grounds were beautifully laid out, and planted with flowers, and, in the midst, played a fountain, and threw high in air its fantastic showers.

The house was antique-looking, and of Gothic style, and as they drove up to it, two or three negro servants came out to the carriage to assist. When the ladies were established in the elegant drawing-rooms, (which opened with French windows on the lawn,) and Mrs. Kedar was somewhat rested, she proposed a walk through the grounds. Lord Falmouth assented, offered her his arm, and Miss Kedar following with her mother's shawl, they set out.

It was again a twilight scene; but I have a partiality for those times of day at Washington, having seen so many beautiful sunsets there. It was twilight, and there was no sound to break the charmed silence, save the sweet, low music of the fountain.

All the loud noise, the bustle, the excitement of a town, was absent from these woods. Nature alone presided there—Nature in her repose. The underwood had been cleared from the tall trees; the grass had been trimmed to such a height; yet, though the place bore marks of order and constant care, it was very beautiful. The scenery around the villa, on the opposite side of the blue, translucent Potomac, was dim from distance, but still distinct enough to show how fine it is, and that in their immediate vicinity would have been a subject for any artist's pencil.

"I have not been here for a year," said Mrs. Kedar, as they walked along; "my health has been so feeble, I hardly expected to reach here this summer. But I am very glad I came; the change will do me good, I doubt not. I see

the gardener has cut down the brushwood, and attended carefully to Allie's favorite flowers."

"Her favorite flowers?" said Lord Falmouth, with an appearance of interest. "Which are her favorite flowers?"

"Those beds of Heliotrope," said the lady, pointing to a large bed of those plants near them.

"So that is your favorite flower! henceforth it shall be mine also," whispered he to the blushing girl.

And now, a turn in the walk brought them full in view of the Potomac. Its blue, tranquil waters were gliding calmly by; not a boat, large or small, to be seen; all was silence; all was gilded with the light of that sunset. In gazing on such a scene, any lofty mind feels too full of it to talk; and so felt Lord Falmouth and Alexanderina as they looked: though occasionally Mrs. Kedar exclaimed, "Oh, is it not beautiful; did you ever see anything like it?"

But they spoke not.

"Life in America would be charming if all were like you," said he to Mrs. Kedar, as they walked back again to the house.

"Like me? sure you jest; a poor invalid, I am poor company: hundreds of others could better entertain you."

"Or like your fair daughter, if you like it better," he said. "The one who shall always dwell in her company will be happy; too happy, perhaps, for this changing earth."

Mrs. Kedar glanced sharply at her guest, as if to ascertain what weight to give his words; and then said, slowly, "and why not *you* always?"

"I!" answered he, as if replying to her look rather than to her words. "Oh, that is my wish; that would constitute my happiness. But she?" added he, as if in doubt.

"She is already won!" said the mother; and they entered the house.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PARTY FROM TOWN.

Two days after their arrival, a gay party came from Washington to visit them. The Chilian Minister's family, Mr. Flewellin, the two attachees mentioned at the beginning of the story, Mr. Ribera and Mr. Attos, and several other gentlemen and ladies came to spend a week or two with them.

All was life and gayety. Dancing, singing, pistol-shooting, promenading, flirting, gossiping, and goodness only knows what was not done there. The gossip concentrated on the fact, that Lord Falmouth was supposed to be paying attention to Miss Kedar; and many, who had never been able to discover the thousand merits of the unassuming girl, now overwhelmed her with civilities, under the supposition that she would soon be a Peeress. But she, the gentle heroine of this tale, who had become fascinated with him for himself alone, who scarcely knew, or thought, or cared what a Peeress was, how did she encounter all this? The same as ever. Calm, placid, she attended to her mother, amused the guests, or listened to Lord Falmouth with the innocent simplicity of a school-girl.

Miss Kedar had never set her heart, as the common saying is, on the gay world. She liked it well enough, but she could not plunge into pleasure with that wild recklessness that many women do, periling affection, comfort, happiness, everything, to gratify *self*. Such was not her nature; she loved home and home comforts, and home affections; these

constituted her heaven. To marry a man she loved, and be happy with him alone, was all she longed for; and now that she had a dim prospect of happiness opening out before her, the thought was almost *too* beautiful for earth.

The Chilian Ambassadors and Mrs. Kedar sat together, some days after the former's arrival at the villa. The two ladies were alone, the other guests having gone on a sailing excursion.

"Alexanderina's birth-day happens next week," said Mrs. Kedar. "Cannot we get up something new? I care no longer for these things; but the young people do. There is your pretty daughter, my daughter, and the two Miss Jones' and several gentlemen. I should think we might get up a Fancy Dress Party in the woods, and have a band of music to play for them. What do you think about it?"

"Well, I should think it would be the very thing, by way of a change; although I hardly know how to dress C—— on the occasion. When do you propose having it?"

"Well, to-day is Tuesday: a week from to-day is Allie's birth-day; it must be on that evening, if at all. I will propose it to our party this evening. I shall have to send to town for a band of music, and get ready the dresses. I will tell them myself what I want them to wear."

"It will be a delightful recreation for them, I dare say," observed the Ministress; and then she added, "By the way, where is your niece, Miss Ariadne Kedar; this affair would delight her, she is so fond of gayety."

"Her mother is sick at her place, ten miles from here, and she is detained with her," answered Mrs. Kedar quickly, as if she wished to change the conversation. And soon after, Madame C——, seeing her own fair daughter on the lawn below, descended to her.

That evening, when all the merry party were talking and

laughing at the tea-table, Mrs. Kedar suddenly announced her plan, and it was met with bursts of applause by all her auditors.

"Oh, capital; let us have it immediately. Pray do, Mrs. Kedar. What costume shall we wear? Where shall we dance? were the reiterated questions and demands from all.

"Patience, my turbulent friends, I must tell you what dresses you are to wear; for I intend deciding that myself," said the hostess, smiling at their excitement.

"Oh, no!" that is not fair; let us choose our own. Then each can dress according to his or her fancy."

"And each probably look ridiculous, because you each may choose costumes entirely different from each other. Listen to me, wild people. It is to celebrate my daughter's birth-day, which takes place next Tuesday, this day week, that I wish to get up something fine for you all. Now, I will write you your orders as to what you are to wear, and send notes to your rooms to-morrow. I must have some hours to decide about the costumes. Do you agree?"

The guests seemed to hesitate; but at last they all said, "Yes," and apparently much pleased with the proposed *fete*, they all adjourned to the drawing-room.

"I wonder what costume she will allot us?" said one of the Miss Jones' to the other, as they sat together, near the window.

"I really cannot imagine," replied the sister. "But I suppose the most prominent ones will be given to the Min-stress's family, and her own daughter. For my part, I cannot think what attraction that girl can have for this Englishman, who, they say, is paying her attention. I don't see anything attractive about her; and I can't imagine how anybody else can. But, then, she is the Vice-President's daughter."

"Oh, yes; I suppose it's her position that makes her. But never mind; I don't care who either of them marry, so long as they will give us a nice party. But hush, here's Mr. Ribera; I do like that man—so engaging."

"I wish he would engage either one of you for life, ejaculated their mother, as the subject of remark approached.

And leaving these silly ones to their equally silly gossip, let us walk out in the moonlight, upon the verdant lawn. Two forms are walking there. They are those of Lord Falmouth and Alexanderina. If I were writing a love story, or rather a tale of sickly sentimentality, which they generally are—if I were doing this, I might, I suppose, burst into extacies about the pale moonlight; and tell how their feelings were like those we attribute to the angels. But I am doing nothing of the sort; nor do I believe in such nonsense. This is a story of *facts* and *feelings*; and *real* feelings are always quiet, and hushed within themselves. Lord Falmouth and the gentle girl at his side were quiet; neither felt quite at their ease. *Her* heart was full of *him*; and *he* was thinking of *her*.

When they had walked up and down on the green grass several times, he said, seeing that she held her head down:

"Allie!—will you let me call you so?—why do you hold your head in that position?"

"I was thinking of you," she innocently answered, as she raised it.

"Of me! Oh, think of me always, my own Allie; and give me the right to think of you."

"I fear I am not worthy of you," was her blushing response.

"But if I think so?"

"Oh, then, let it be as you say."

He caught her in his arms, but swift as light, she escaped

away, and flew to the solitude of her own chamber; and he returned to her mother in the drawing-room.

For hours she sat silent, thinking on what had just passed between her and her idol—the first ruler her heart had ever known. That he had asked her, in sincerity and truth, to be his wife, was too great happiness, she thought, for mortal woman. She almost thought it must be a dream. He, so great, so distinguished, wished to marry her, a simple American girl; and she should go to England, that great world in itself, and live with him in some one of his castles, or travel on the continent, if she liked! Oh, how charming! What happiness, what exstasy! And full of these bright day-dreams, her waiting-maid found her in bed, and undressed her as she lay asleep.

The next day, all was confusion and bustle about the costumes for the *fete*, which Mrs. Kedar sent the notes about to their respective rooms. Every one kept up a mystery about what they were going to wear, and a private messenger was dispatched to town to have the dresses got ready for the night of the ball. And the young girls talked and discussed the affair; and the young men flirted with them, and practiced target-shooting, and whiled away the time as all the butterflies of society do.

Madame C—— and Mrs. Kedar attended to the arrangements of the garden, and made extensive preparations for a fine supper to be held among the trees and flowers; on the former of which they intended hanging lamps, to light the guests at their repast; and the servants were also to be attired in fairy costume, and all was to be like a fairy scene.

The amiable Ministress entered into the spirit of the project with the glee of a child; and these two charming women, by dint of energy, soon completed everything to their satisfaction.

Lord Falmouth and Alexanderina, after they came to a mutual understanding about their feelings, separated themselves from the rest of the gay company, and walked and rode alone. Occasionally Mademoiselle C—— accompanied them on horseback; but she also had her admirer to claim her exclusive attention, and so they were generally left alone.

The two Miss Jones' were enchanted with the attentions of the attachees, and their mother already saw them married in prospective. While Mrs. Hawkwood, (who, although married, still loved admiration,) seized on Mr. Flewellin, and was soon deep in the mazes of a flirtation with him; and her niece, Miss Dashwood, claimed the spare time of Monsieur C——, with whom she endeavored to discuss European politics.

One day Mr. Flewellin, who was a great admirer of Ariadne Kedar's beauty, asked why she was not at the villa, and where she was? and Mrs. Hawkwood replying to the question, that she was detained at her mother's, they insensibly began talking of Ariadne and her cousin.

They were all in the bowling gallery at the time, and these two, pausing at a distant corner of the room, while the others continued their amusement, began conversing:

"I have known Alexanderina and Ariadne for some years," said Mrs. Hawkwood; "they are very different in character and appearance. I must say I love Alexanderina best. She is so truthful, so sincere and good; although not to compare with her cousin in beauty. I wonder that neither are married yet. Ariadne is nineteen, her cousin eighteen."

"I think the Vice-President's daughter soon will be, if appearances deceive us not," said Mr. Flewellin.

"Ah, yes! so all say, too," answered his companion, "Lord Falmouth seems devoted to her. Do you know him well?"

"Know him!" exclaimed Mr. Flewellin, as if amazed at the question. "I have known him for many years; and a nobler, kinder being than George Falmouth, one would have difficulty in finding."

"She will have a splendid position as Lady Falmouth; and it seems certain to happen from what her mother and Madame C—— say. And, bye the bye, I sometimes thought that your fancies inclined to Ariadne. We might have a double marriage before long, if that were the case."

"Me!" said Mr. Flewellin, in a gay tone. "Ah, my dear Lady, I am not a marrying man. Besides," he added, "you know, we are to wait for each other."

"Nonsense! Will you never give up your nonsense?" she said, laughing; and they began throwing the balls with the others.

CHAPTER V.

THE FETE CHAMPETRE.

ALEXANDERINA and E—— had many long conversations about their costumes, and how they should dress their hair for the *fete*.

E—— was a lively brunette, witty and agreeable. Her liveliness formed a pleasing contrast to the other's pensiveness; and both being unusually refined and elegant, they soon conceived a warm attachment for each other.

The Monday before the night for the *fete* soon arrived. All the costumes had come; and, although everybody meant to keep everything a secret from the others, yet everybody seemed to know everything about the affair.

The garden decorations were all completed. An immense crimson awning was suspended over the spot where the people were to dance. Within, it was hung with gaily painted lamps, and adorned with festoons of flowers; and further along, the supper table was arranged in exquisite style, by Madame and Miss Kedar, and everything looked gay and beautiful.

Lord Falmouth had openly declared his intention of going in an Armenian dress he had brought from the East, and Mrs. Kedar laughingly jested him about the dark shrouded form he would display, the high-pointed cap, etc. Still, he persevered in his intention, and wished to discover what Alexanderina would wear; but that she would not tell, and her mother also refused to gratify his curiosity, so that

he remained in heathen darkness on that subject. Every one was too much occupied in their own vanity to notice any one.

The wished-for evening at length arrived. Tea was served in their rooms, where they were all busily talking, and laughing, and dressing. Madame E—— and Mrs. Kedar attired themselves in the latter's room, while Miss Kedar and C—— arranged their costumes in Alexanderina's apartment.

The dress her mother had provided for her was a beautiful Hungarian Hussar costume, and that of the lovely C—— was a Swiss Ballad Singer's; both were pleased with the choice, and, as they were dressing, the maid expended all her energy in praising them. Miss Kedar's hair was plaited in long braids down her back; that of E—— was worn in long ringlets. Alexanderina's small feet were cased in fancy top boots; those of M'lle C—— in tiny slippers. Just as Miss Kedar was about placing on her head the little hat and feathers which completes the Hungarian dress, she remembered a small bottle of perfume which she wanted; and which she recollected having left in a small room in one of the turrets of the villa, and she sent Ann to get it.

Presently the girl returned, saying the door of the room was locked, and she could not get in.

"Locked, Ann, you are mistaken, indeed. I was there this morning, and left it open," said her mistress.

"Indeed, Miss, it's locked *now*. At any rate, I tried the door several times, and could not move it."

"Let me see," said Alexanderina. "I want some perfume very much, and I have none but that." She ascended the flight of stairs to the door of the room, and found it locked as the girl had said. "Why, how strange. What can it mean. I left it open this morning," exclaimed Miss Kedar,

impatiently, and again she assailed the lock, but in vain, it would not yield. "Well, I cannot imagine how it came locked; but, no matter, I can borrow some perfume from mamma," said she, as she went back again, and E—— having completed her toilette, they descended to the drawing-room. None of the guests were there, except Lord Falmouth, in his mysterious Armenian dress, and he hailed with delight the appearance of the two fair girls. While they sat chattering with him, the band of music on the lawn played some of its lively airs, and Alexanderina, in listening to the melody of her lover's voice, and the melody of the instruments, almost fancied herself in another world.

Presently Madame C—— and Mrs. Kedar joined them. The one was a "Belle a hundred years since," the other a Gipsy. The costume of that singular race suited well the dark, bright face of Madame C——, while the gay dress of the beautiful Belle set off Mrs. Kedar's delicate style of beauty.

One by one all the others came. Then ensued many surprises, a great deal of talking and laughing, and mystifying, and finally at eight o'clock they all went to the ball-room.

The two Miss Jones were in Polish dress, Mrs. Hawkwood in a "Die Vernon," Miss Dashwood as an Italian Vintage Girl, Mr. Flewellin as a Greek, Mrs. Jones in a Sybil costume, the two attachees as Monks of the Capuchin order, and the others in different dresses, which the taste of their entertainer had provided for them. It was not a numerous, but a select and joyous party. Every face sparkled with smiles, all seemed happy, and I will venture to affirm that *one*, at least, was perfectly happy there that night; and that one was—Alexanderina. The Armenian and the Hungarian girl walked apart from the others, and spoke in whispered

tones. The moonlight came stealing on the scene, blending with the gay lights, and diffusing a gentle calm over the noisy dance.

While they were walking about the woods, the Gipsy confronted them, and asked to tell their fortunes.

"Much good fortune is in store for you, fair people," she muttered, laughingly, as Lord Falmouth crossed her hand with silver. "But you'll both die some day."

"Every one knows that, I believe," said Lord Falmouth, started from his gravity into fits of laughter, as the gay lady sprang away to some other group that attracted her attention.

And M'lle E—— sang a pretty song, and the Miss Jones' danced a pretty dance, and the band poured forth its melody, and all was life and gayety.

It was, perhaps, ten o'clock; the fun and the frolic was at its hight, when Miss Kedar was called from her lover's side for a moment by her mother, and Lord Falmouth was left alone in the illuminated wood, standing near the ball-room. As he stood there, his arms folded within the vast sleeves of his Armenian dress, his eyes downcast, sunk in revery, a slight sound startled him near by. He looked up, and immediately before him, leaning against a tree, her eyes fixed upon him, through the velvet mask she wore, he saw what he took to be a visitant from another world, so brilliantly beautiful was the figure.

She wore a Fairy's dress, and the tissue spangled with gold, which floated around her was not more ethereal looking than was her form.

On her tiny feet were white satin shoes; and on her ankles and arms, gold bracelets. A starred veil was thrown around her head, and half fell over the mask she wore. Although he could not discover her features through her

mask, yet her beautiful form induced him to think her lovely. This splendid apparition remained motionless some minutes, while Lord Falmouth gazed upon her in speechless admiration. Then she put her finger to her mouth, and stepping backward all the time, whispered, "Come," "come."

Lord Falmouth moved forward mechanically, as she called; and still stepping backward toward the denser forest, she whispered, "Come."

They thus proceeded some distance from the ball-room tent, when suddenly the beautiful form fell down upon the ground, motionless, before him, and lay there on the green sward as if without life.

Believing himself in a dream of enchantment, the gentleman stooped down to ascertain if it was really a being of earth he saw, and taking off the mask to give her air, a profusion of curls fell over the face, and lifting these aside, he saw the features of Ariadne Kedar. The attitude in which she lay, the expression of her features, and the splendid dress touched by the moonlight's beams, formed a picture of fairy-like magnificence, such as might challenge many an artist's skill.

Wondering how she came there, and what he should do for her without exciting the curiosity of the guests, and thereby attracting disagreeable attention toward himself, Lord Falmouth set off to find some water to revive her. The villa stood on the river shore, and a green bank sloped down to the water's edge. He ran to it, dipped his cap full, and then hurried back. She still lay in the same position, and, when he raised her fair face, and gently threw some water in it, she feebly unclosed her great blue eyes, and then shut them again.

Presently, after several efforts, she partially revived, and

Lord Falmouth, after assisting her to rise from the damp ground, asked where she would go.

"I feel very faint as yet, sir. I cannot think what made me faint just now, perhaps it was the excitement of coming here, for I stole away from mamma's house early this morning, and, arriving here at dusk, concealed myself in the house, without being seen, so that I might surprise them all to-night."

"And you have surprised and enchanted at least *me*, already," exclaimed Lord Falmouth, who could not prevent himself from being charmed with this splendid beauty, without suspecting the trick of the fainting fit.

"And you came to surprise us to-night; and where were you going when I met you just now?"

"I was about making my appearance. I wanted to make them believe I was a Fairy."

"You look like one; you might easily pass for a celestial being at present," was his gallant reply, and the bold girl turned full upon him the light of those beautiful eyes which were fated to cause him so many sorrows; but any one to look upon so glorious a being would have been bewildered, and so was Lord Falmouth.

Leaning on his arm, the Fairy wended her way to the ball-room. They were all dancing, and the sounds of their joyous merriment might be heard far away; but dancing and merriment ceased in utter astonishment when Ariadne entered on the arm of Lord Falmouth. Alexanderina stared fixedly at Ariadne and her lover when they entered, and a shade passed over her quiet face; perhaps it was the first symptom of jealousy, but she gayly approached them, and welcomed them, saying, "Why, cousin, is this you?"

"Yes; I am the Queen of the Fairies, come to honor your revels, and this is an enchanted Knight I found just

now in the woods. Ah, aunt! how do you do?" she cried, as the "Belle of a hundred years since" approached her. "Are you not surprised to see me?"

"No, Ariadne, I am not surprised at anything you do," responded Mrs. Kedar, with a slightly ironical air.

"No, indeed!" said her neice, in the same tone. "Well, it's lucky you are not; for I doubt if you could follow all my fancies, as I believe it takes you longer to find people out than most persons require."

And with this sarcasm the haughty beauty turned away, and bidding the music play a fancy dance, began dancing a solo.

Although astonished at her boldness, all the guests paused in admiration of her grace. No movements could be more graceful, more harmonious (if I may be allowed to use the expression) than her's, and at the conclusion a murmur of applause ran around the room.

Mr. Flewellin now came forward to her, and taking his arm, they went in to supper together. Lord Falmouth had returned to Miss Kedar's side, and Madame C—— and Mrs. Kedar were preceding the party by taking the head and foot of the table. All the guests seated themselves round in rural wicket chairs, and joy and pleasure seemed to preside over the scene. All the choicest luxuries of the season were spread before them. Oranges, pine-apples, tropical fruits from the Indies, and everything that could tempt the palate or please the eye, was there.

And the young ladies talked and flirted, and Ariadne laughed louder than any, as she talked with Mr. Flewellin. Of all the costumes there, her's was the most magnificent. and the flashings of the ornaments on her dress was not more brilliant than the light of her eyes. All the gentlemen looked at her with admiration; all the women with

envy. Mrs. Kedar looked annoyed by the presence of her niece ; but Alexanderina, who could not foresee the future, and consequently could not know how much that night would affect her future happiness, felt happy as she stood by the side of the man she loved.

And now the gay party had finished their sylvan repast, at which they had been attended by the servants of the villa attired as Turkish slaves.

"One more dance, and then we will break up; it is past one o'clock in the morning," was the joyous cry, as they all returned to the ball-room; and the dance was done. They all looked heated, jaded, and tired, except Ariadne, who continued to enliven the air by her merry laughter, so they all returned to the drawing room of the villa.

"Well, Queen of the Fairies, how have you enjoyed yourself?" asked Mrs. C——, as the gay girl flung herself, on a sofa, when they entered the room.

"Oh, delightfully! You know when I make up my mind to do anything, I always accomplish it; and I resolutely determined to enjoy myself this evening, when I left mamma's this morning, in a close carriage, and drove furiously, so as to reach here in time. Then I secreted myself in one of the little rooms of the turret to dress, and at the proper time I made my appearance. I think I played my part with spirit."

"Oh, it was you, then, who locked the door of the turret when I tried to get in," said Miss Kedar. "I could not imagine what was the matter with the door."

"Yes, it was me," answered Ariadne, laughing; and turning to Mrs. Hawkwood, she said, "Well, Die Vernon, I hope you have completed your conquest of this unhappy man's heart this evening. I saw you with him some time."

"Well, no, my dear," replied the gay lady, "I must say I found him difficult. Perhaps his affections are pre-engaged," she added, with a knowing look.

"Oh, yes, I dare say they are—to many," and Ariadne laughed her own musical laugh. All the gentlemen now were gathered around her, and she dispensed smiles and gay wit seemingly without an effort. The others were comparatively silent for they had danced and talked themselves almost to death.

"Now, Fairy Queen, I want to know how you came to know that we were going to have a ball to-night," said Mr. Flewellin.

"How I heard! why, some of the people traveling between this house and ours, told our servants, who told me, and I resolved to be present; and I came, saw, and conquered.'"

"Of course you did," was the gallant rejoinder.

"Now, let us have one fine song before I go to bed; for I suppose that you can provide me a room," she added, turning to Mrs. Kedar, who assented, and she opened the piano, and burst into a wild, beautiful melody, and when its thrilling notes had ceased, she bowed, smiled, and left the room.

All the others also sought their slumbers, and Lord Falmouth, as he sunk into dreams, was haunted by the vision of the Fairy Queen.

CHAPTER VI.

FLIRTATIONS.

ALEXANDERINA went into her mother's room that night, although it was near two in the morning, before Madame C—— and E—— left the lady of the house to her repose, so many things had they mutually to say. At length, the brilliant gipsy, and the pretty Swiss departed, and Miss Kedar began undressing before her mother's mirror.

"How strange it is that Ariadne should have come to us to-night," said she. "I should have as soon expected to see a ghost."

"Yes, it *was* singular," answered Mrs. Kedar, "I only hope she will not cause you to regret it."

"Cause me to regret! How could that be, mamma?"

"It might easily be, with a woman of her character."

"How so? Do explain. You never dealt in mysteries before. Don't do so now."

"Well, if she were to entice away your lover, it would not please you so well, would it?"

"Take away Lord Falmouth," exclaimed Miss Kedar, as if struck with amazement at the question. "Oh, I cannot believe that she or any other could do that."

"You are young and innocent. You don't know the world," was the mother's calm reply.

"And do you then *really* suppose that Ariadne has come here with any such intention?"

"It may be. I don't absolutely say it is so," answered

Mrs. Kedar; "but she loves admiration, as she loves her life, and might, merely to try her skill, take him away from you."

"Oh, if I could believe so, I should indeed wish her away, but I cannot think it. You know you have ever been prejudiced against Ariadne. I presume she only came here on the whim of the moment. It is only a jest; nothing more. And as for Lord Falmouth, why, if he loves me as he says he does, he loves me too well to give me up for another; so I shall be happy, dear mamma, and set my heart at rest."

A peculiar smile flitted over the mother's face, but she made no further remark, and both mother and daughter were soon buried in repose, in their different apartments.

The next morning, at breakfast, all the guests looked somewhat fagged from the last night's dissipation, except Ariadne, who made her appearance in a blue muslin dress, and looked like a sunbeam personified. Her long hair fell in ringlets to her waist, and her large blue eyes darted fire.

"How is your mother, my dear," said Mrs. Jones, addressing her across the table.

"I left mamma rather better than usual," was the reply.

"Does she like the country as well as town?" said Miss Dashwood.

"Not so well, but now she is there for the summer, she thinks she had better remain, not being well enough to be removed home."

"And do you intend returning to her immediately?"

"No, I intend staying a week or two with aunt and cousin."

"Miss Ariadne," said Mr Flewellin, "this is a fine day for riding, don't you want to take a ride on this fine road over the hill?"

"Oh yes I should be charmed to go," and with seeming artless simplicity, she clapped her tiny hands.

"Well, get ready immediately after breakfast, and we will chase the winds this morning; but what will you do for a habit? You brought no luggage with you, did you?"

"Oh yes, I have some dresses and my habit along with me. I will get ready," and she ran from the room, leaving every one astonished at her grace and loveliness. Lord Falmouth again looked after her admiringly.

After breakfast, all went to the drawing-room, as usual, and consulted what was to be done for the day. Some decided on going to the bowling-alley; others went to walk in the woods till dinner-time, taking books along to amuse themselves; and Lord Falmouth was left alone in the parlor, when two horses were brought before the door for Mr Flewellin and Ariadne. Presently, she came bounding down stairs.

She wore a dark blue habit, and a black hat and feathers. In her hand she held a small riding whip. As she passed the drawing-room door, Lord Falmouth came towards her.

"You are admirably equipped for riding, Miss Kedar," said he, as she paused before him.

She suddenly started, as if she had not seen him, and looking curiously in his face, said:

"Ah, I believe it is Lord Falmouth that I see?"

"Yes, it is none other, and so you are off. When will you be back?"

"I really don't know; that depends upon the agreeableness of my beau: if I find him very agreeable, I may stay long, if not, I shall soon return."

"He has every inducement then to call forth all his powers of eloquence," said Lord Falmouth, glancing towards Mr. Flewellin, who came forward to assist her on her horse.

When placed upon the animal's back, she rapidly rode away, the feathers of her hat floating behind her in the air. "I have never seen so beautiful a woman in my life; no, not even at the court of the Queen," he said aloud, as he re-entered the room. His gentle love, at that moment came in with her bonnet on, and he went with her to take a walk, while Mrs. Kedar was overlooking the servants as they removed the ruins of the last night's feast. In the afternoon, just before dinner, Ariadne, flushed from the exercise, returned from her ride, and devoted herself to an interesting flirtation with Mr. Flewellin for the rest of the day and evening, and Alexanderina, re-assured by her cousin's indifferent manner as to her designs on Lord Falmouth, became as confiding and affectionate toward her, as she had ever been.

Thus, in conversation and agreeable nothings a week wore away, when Mrs. Hawkwood received letters which she said would oblige her to tear herself away from such delightful society, her presence being imperatively demanded at home, and she departed with her niece, promising to see them again next summer. Mrs. Jones also, and her two daughters, returned to town, and the young attachees went with them, so that the party at the villa consisted only of intimate friends.

Ariadne continued as wildly gay as ever, and persisted in devoting herself to Mr. Flewellin, only occasionally talking to Lord Falmouth, and that in such a way as not to lead any one to imagine she wished to coquette with him. Mrs. Kedar's delicate health seemed to improve by the country air; and altogether, they formed a loving family party.

It was now generally understood that Lord Falmouth and the Vice-President's daughter were engaged, and they were treated by their friends in that tacit understanding manner,

which implies that engaged lovers are to be left to themselves, and not be disturbed.

Madame C—— loved both the Misses Kedar, and with her usual urbanity, treated both equally kindly. Perhaps her own generous nature induced her to love Alexanderina most, for the instincts of our own nature teach us who are most like ourselves, but outwardly she treated both alike. She felt rejoiced that one so gentle and so good as Alexanderina should form so lofty and advantageous a match as she was about to enter into, and had it have been her own child, could not have felt happier, or have expressed more joy.

One evening, some days after Ariadne had been at the Villa, Lord Falmouth came into the drawing-room, and found Ariadne Kedar there alone. The rest of the family and visitors, were dispersed about the house in various directions, and she alone was there singing and playing on the piano.

Sometimes when she was silent and thoughtful, a melancholy expression would dwell upon her features, mellowing their somewhat haughty mockery and gaiety, and now such a look was impressed there momentarily. Perhaps the song she had been singing was mournful, and its plaintive notes influenced her soul. At all events, she looked particularly subdued and captivating.

She was dressed in good taste, in a blue silk robe, and her beautiful hair was plainly smoothed over her pale round cheeks, and being twisted round her head like a crown, was enclosed in a comb. As she sat listlessly turning over the leaves of the music book, he paused to look at her, and, suddenly looking up, she perceived him; and starting exclaimed:

“Oh, my Lord, is that you?”

“I was looking at you,” he said. Had she here been in

her wonted mood, some gay witticism would have followed this remark, but a cloud seemed to have thrown its shadows on Ariadne's spirit that evening, and she made no reply.

"Will you sing me that song I heard you singing as I came through the hall?" said he, after a pause of some moments, which she did not break.

"Oh, certainly; I shall be too happy," she replied, and immediately began, "Then you'll remember me," from a beautiful foreign opera. As she accented the words, her wandering gaze fell on his, and the almost unearthly sweetness of her voice, thrilled his soul as she went on. When she ceased, her hands still lay on the piano keys, and her eyes were still fixed in abstraction before her.

"You are not in your wonted mood of gaiety and frolic this evening," at length said the gentleman.

"Am I not! Oh, pray excuse me, if I am dull, but I was thinking about mamma to-night. I am going shortly, you know!"

"Going to leave us! Ah, indeed! What, so soon! What shall we do without so bright a Fairy Queen?" and a shade of sadness seemed mixed with his reply.

"Do without me!" she exclaimed, staring him full in the face. "Why you, at least, have *your* Fairy Queen always to beguile your sadness; and as for aunt, she cares little about me, and Madame C—— and daughter are only acquaintances. No, I shall not be much missed."

"By me, at least, you will be, I assure you," he said, in a low tone.

"Well, if you care anything about my society, you care enough to seek it. Come and pay me a visit at Doux Repos. Mamma is there, and every thing shall go on merry as a marriage bell, if you will come. I have asked Mr. Flewellin, and he has promised to come."

"I shall be happy to go, and to have the pleasure of seeing you there," said he; but he thought of Alexanderina, and his brow darkened. What would the Vice-President's wife and daughter think of his going from them to spend some days or weeks with her cousin at another house. Surely they would have reason, not only to doubt his affection, but his intention; but then she who asked the favor of his company was *so beautiful*. All these thoughts passed through his mind like lightning, as he sat beside the beautiful Ariadne. Her eyes were roving the apartment, as if in reverie, and presently she said:

"I used to be here, Lord Falmouth, when a little child, and I have often played hide-and-seek behind these very doors. How one changes as they grow older," she added thoughtfully.

"Yes; some change for better, some for worse, but you have only grown more beautiful from the lapse of time."

Ariadne smiled, and looked at him joyously as he made the observation. She knew she was handsome, and compliments pleased her.

"I don't know about that," said she, after a pause of some moments. "I sometimes think that I had better never have been born at all."

"Why, beautiful Ariadne? What makes you think so?"

"Oh, I don't know," was the sad reply. "I don't think any one cares much whether I live or die," and the artful girl looked at him with those beaming eyes. An expression of tenderness came over the gentleman's face; he took her hand—he seemed about to say something, when as they both raised their eyes, there, standing in the doorway, looking at them, pale, grave, and amazed, there stood Alexanderina.

CHAPTER VII.

MAN'S CAPRICES.

It is time, gentle reader, that I told you something about my hero, for at present, he must appear to you like one of those mysterious knights one reads about in tales of chivalry, of whom no one knoweth whence he cometh, or whither he goeth. Not so is it with my handsome hero; he is indeed a substantial human being, though his actions are not always as they should have been.

James Sigismund Maximilian Anglesey, Lord Falmouth, in his own right a Peer, and heir to a large fortune, which he came in possession of at twenty, was, at the beginning of this story, thirty years of age. He had traveled extensively on the continent, possessed a fine mind, and kind disposition, and, although a man of violent impulse, notwithstanding his calm exterior, he was generally noble minded and honorable.

His mother and sisters, who lived at one of his castles in England, constantly urged him to marry, and offered to his favorable attention, the most beautiful and accomplished women at that Court; yet he averred, that when he married he cared not about his wife's pedigree or fortune, having an ample one of his own, and, as he loved none of those ladies, he still remained a bachelor.

Wishing to see the New World, he came to the United States, and traveled through the country; though he thought the American women pretty, none of them pleased his

fancy, till, at the Ambassadors' party, he was struck with the appearance of the two Miss Kedars. The splendid beauty of Ariadne enchanted him, but the quiet innocence and goodness of Alexanderina insensibly won upon the fine feelings of his nature so much that he resolved to marry her. It certainly could not be called a marriage of disparagement, since she was the Vice-President's daughter, her father one of the magnates of the land. Although she would bring him no fortune, yet she might be considered almost his equal. Unconsciously, at first sight, he had won her affections, and so week after week flew away, and she saw him constantly. What wonder is it she should have learned to love him, and that her young heart looked forward with delight to the hour when she should remain with him always.

Lord Falmouth possessed the most charming manner, and that facility of adaptation which enabled him to suit himself to any one whom he tried to please, and he *had* tried to please her. But now another form haunted his fancy, and after the brilliant appearance of the Fairy Queen he found himself constantly thinking of her. Ariadne, with her wonted tact, made no violent attack upon him. She let nature alone. Confident that, if she had opportunity, she could win him from her less attractive cousin, she planned her movements with quiet and skill. Vows, and engagements, and oaths, were nothing in the eyes of Ariadne Kedar, and longing to get him away to her own house, where she could execute her plans at leisure, she was content to remain an uninterested spectator of the love of her cousin, and to appear secretly indifferent to Lord Falmouth.

But, in truth, as far as her haughty, selfish nature would allow her, Ariadne had fallen in love with him at the party of Madame C——. She admired his fine appearance, and fine manners, but even to those she loved most, Ariadne

was selfish and exacting. Very different in filial duty was she to her cousin, who was the self-devoted friend and companion of her mother.

And, after this short digression, let us return to them.

Both Ariadne and Lord Falmouth started with surprise at the sight of Alexanderina, and he let fall the pretty hand he held in his; but they need not have done so, for after looking at him sadly for a moment, she went away, leaving them to their *tete-a-tete* undisturbed.

"Your sweetheart will be angry at you for this," said Ariadne in a tone of mockery. "Are you not afraid? O man of iron nerve."

He made her no reply. His brow darkened, and rising from her side, he began pacing the room. He seemed angry at himself, the mute look of reproof Miss Kedar threw at him with her large blue eyes, and the silentness with which she went immediately away, spoke volumes.

Ariadne sat still, and archly contemplated him. Presently, ejaculating, "I wish I never had been born," he rushed from the room.

When Miss Kedar left the room a moment before, she did not hurry to tell her mother her jealous grief. A feeling of shame prevented her from doing so. No, she plunged into the thickest recesses of the forest trees and flowers, and sitting down upon the stump of an old tree, tried to forget what she had just seen, but she could not. The vision of Lord Falmouth holding her cousin's hand in his, and whispering love to her, was too much for her, and she sat slightly pondering on it, and recalling her mother's prophecy, when a tall form came walking swiftly through the wood, and, even by the moonlight, she recognized her lover.

After taking several turns to the right and left, he sud-

denly dashed through the trees immediately where she was sitting, and was by her side before she could move away.

"Gracious Heavens! is this you, Miss Kedar," was his hasty exclamation, and kneeling down on the green grass, he entreated her to forgive his having caused her pain by his conduct.

"Oh, no, Lord Falmouth, you need not ask me to forgive you; you have a right, of course, to do as you please, it is nothing to me," was the somewhat pettish reply.

"Come now, do be reasonable, dear Miss Kedar; let all that nonsense go for nothing, just what it is worth, and pray come into the house with me; the night air will give you cold."

The young lady forgot her anger at her lover's voice. She allowed herself, after a slight resistance, and a little anger, to be persuaded to go into the house, and this transient lover's quarrel was over. Yet, after that night, it must be confessed that Miss Kedar felt less kindly and acted less kindly towards her cousin. Love is soon alarmed for its idol, and she feared anything and everything that could interfere with her Elysium. Ariadne did not have a long conversation with Lord Falmouth for some days, and in the meantime her father came to take her home. Her mother wanted her immediately. She obeyed, because she did not wish to stay, and because she thought her absence would induce Lord Falmouth to come to Doux Repos.

The morning of her departure they met in the hall. Ariadne was awaiting her father, and again Lord Falmouth was reminded of how lovely she was, as he gazed on her fair face. She extended her hand to him, and said with *naïve* simplicity, "Good bye, my Lord, I am going to leave Paradise."

"Are you," said he, grasping her hand in his. "Well I

shall see you soon again, I am coming to see you at your house."

"Oh, how happy we shall be, so come soon," she exclaimed. At this moment her father came, and all the rest of the party joined them to bid adieu.

Mrs. Kedar coldly responded to her niece's caresses. Alexanderina was less loving, perhaps, than she once had been, and Madame C—— and her daughter were the same as ever. Ariadne sprang into the carriage, and was soon lost to their view amid the tall trees of the forest.

After her departure, although he tried to convince himself that it was all folly, Lord Falmouth felt a void around and within. There was something so animated, so buoyant, so joyous about that girl, that threw an enchantment around whatever she said or did. The Villa seemed suddenly to become very dull. He wondered what was the matter with it. Alas! thus it ever is in life. We think the change is in others, when it is in our own hearts. As I said before, it was generally understood that the Vice-President's daughter and the Englishman were engaged to be married. No definite time was fixed, but then he had offered himself, and all thought that a few weeks, or months, would consummate the rest. When, then, a week after Ariadne's departure, he spoke of going back to town for a few days, neither the lady nor her daughter suspected anything; and he left them, they anticipating his return within a week, as they had decided on staying at the Villa until October.

Conscious that he was not acting rightly, Lord Falmouth felt somewhat ashamed, as he left the amiable family, and took the road back to Washington, which he had not pursued a mile, ere he branched off, and set out in another direction for Doux Repos.

The route lay through a beautiful woodland country.

The tall trees and gently undulating meadows were ripe with bud and blossom. Shrubs and wild flowers flourished in regular confusion.

Numerous country seats also adorned the way, and Lord Falmouth spent two hours in admiring the beauty and prolific vegetation of our country.

At length, he arrived at Doux Repos, which was a much smaller house, and not so tastefully laid out as Paradise. It was built in the same style, however, and bore a great resemblance to it.

He was received by a tall, thin woman, who looked something like Ariadne, and who introduced herself as the young lady's mother. She was not handsome, and probably never was so. Her face was very long and thin, her features prominent, and eyes sunken. Her manner was quiet, (if manner that can be called which is no manner at all,) and she welcomed him cordially to Doux Repos, saying that her daughter was in the garden, but would be there soon to receive him. The gentleman sat conversing with her about the beauties of her place, etc., when the daughter entered by a glass-door from the garden. She looked surprised at seeing him, and her face brightened into a smile as he paid the compliments of the occasion. Then she presented her father, who had not been presented to Lord Falmouth, when he came to bring her from Paradise, and they all formed a gay party, talking and laughing together for sometime, ere they went in to tea.

CHAPTER VIII.

INCONSTANCY.

MR. and MRS. KEDAR were delighted with the honor of having so distinguished a gentleman staying with them, and spared neither time nor pains to render his visit agreeable; but it was Ariadne he came to see, and without her their attentions would have been lost or unappreciated.

Mr. Flewellin came next day after Lord Falmouth, and although surprised to find him there, he became one of the family as he had been accustomed to be when he paid visits to Paradise or Doux Repos.

He entertained Mrs. Kedar with a poetical description of her daughter's appearance at the *fete* at Paradise, and the vain mother, who delighted in rank and show, and still more at the idea that her daughter was the reigning beauty, listened with eager attention. Ariadne, although vain, like her mother, had many strong points of character, which that mother possessed not, and could not comprehend. She was a woman of judgment; there were in her character none of those evanescent emotions that are generally seen in young women. Her mind was as thoughtful as any man's, and her sagacity seldom at fault. She did not much resemble either parent in manner or appearance, for both were quiet people and she was wildly gay, and now determined to make a conquest of Lord Falmouth, she assumed even more than was natural.

Day after day passed away, and found him ever with

her, when she sang, or walked, or played, and he persuaded himself, as each day stole more of his heart away, that it was only more deeply fixed at Paradise, while Alexanderina and her mother were expecting him soon to return to them, and the young lady dreamt day-dreams which were destined not to be realized.

When Lord Falmouth spoke of leaving them, and returning to Paradise, Ariadne would look at him so sadly, and pout so prettily that he could not find it in his heart to tear himself away, and he delayed his departure, day after day, and only became the more in love the longer he did stay.

If Ariadne spoke of her cousin, sometimes in conversation, she always did it kindly, and seemed to feel most lovingly toward her. Toward her aunt, also, she seemed to cherish a reverential regard. She had too supreme a contempt for human nature, to be anything but urbane to every one, and to speak well of every one.

She played well on the harp, and one evening they sat together in the arbor in the garden, he gazing on her as she sang. It was a plaintive love song, and she threw into the execution a world of expression and feeling. When she ceased, she sat still, her long slender fingers played carelessly with the strings.

Presently, Lord Falmouth spoke.

"I think I must leave you this week. I feel that it is dangerous for me to stay here any longer."

"Leave us!" cried the young lady, laying both hands in his. "Oh, you really are not going away, are you?"

"Oh, I must go, for if I stay longer I shall want to stay always."

"And why cannot we be always together? What prevents you from remaining?"

"What prevents me! Am I not in honor bound to another, to Alexanderina?"

"And so you will sacrifice me for her?" said Ariadne, with a scornful smile on her thin lips. "Is she your equal in mind? Can she understand you as well as I; but perhaps, like other intellectual men, you prefer marrying a silly woman to a bright one?"

"Oh no, you know better. You know I love you; but my truth, my honor, oblige me to marry."

"Alexanderina is too proud to take you, if she knew that," said Ariadne; "to be married from a tie of honor is not very flattering."

"If she knew that I loved you, do you suppose that she would give me up?" asked he, a sudden thought seeming to strike his mind.

"Certainly, of course my cousin would," was the reply of the artful girl.

"And if I can get released from this engagement, we will be married," and he drew the beautiful girl toward him, and kissed her. Still a mental struggle of conscience seemed going on in his mind; for several minutes he stood motionless, looking down, and his hand pressed to his head, as if to still the thoughts that rushed through his brain.

But time proved the avenger for that night's action.

They returned to the house. He left her soon, and went to his room, while she hastened to her mother.

When alone, in sober thought, the wild witcheries of her voice and smile no longer before him, Lord Falmouth took an inverted view of *self*, and endeavored to find some excuse for what he was about to do, but none offered.

He thought of the gentle girl he had wooed and won, within the last two months, and of how treacherously he was about to treat her; but finally he determined not to think,

and taking pen ink and paper, he sat down and wrote to Alexanderina, requesting his release from his engagement. He could give no reason, state no fact, why or wherefore, all he asked was that the engagement should be null and void.

After he wrote the note and sealed it, he did not dare to think upon it, and went to bed.

The next morning, the note was sent from Doux Repos to the other Villa, and, knowing that the reply would be what he wished, knowing the young lady's pride would prompt her to relinquish an unwilling lover, he tried to banish all troublesome thoughts from his mind, and abandoned himself to Ariadne's allurements more than ever. Mrs. Kedar entered, with childish glee, into their amusements, and Mr. Flewellin, though astonished at his friend's conduct, was as attentive as ever.

Two days after he sent the letter, a reply came. He was released; that was all the note contained, written in Miss Kedar's clear, pretty hand-writing. He consoled himself in the belief that she would soon forget him, and wed another, and his new love did all she could to strengthen the supposition.

But I must turn to Paradise, and see what is happening there in these unhappy times.

CHAPTER IX.

EXPIATION.

WHEN Lord Falmouth first left the ladies of the Villa they confidently expected to see him again in a few days, but, when two weeks elapsed and he came not, they really began to marvel what had become of him, and where he was. At last his cruel letter arrived.

They were all playing whist together, when one of the servants brought it to them.

"Excuse me a moment, Madame C——," said Miss Kedar, as she opened the note, "I will play directly." She glanced at the written page—looked at it again, at the top and bottom—turned pale, half arose from her chair, then fell upon the floor in a fainting fit. Mrs. Kedar and her friend, alarmed at the sight, sprang to her assistance; the mother seizing the letter for an explanation of the scene; the friend holding the unhappy girl's head, and dispatching her own daughter for cologne.

The mother had no sooner deciphered its contents, than with an expression of desperate resolve, she laid the note down, and calling some of the servants had her daughter carried to bed. For some hours she did not recover, and both ladies watched her with anxious tenderness. When the subject of the note was communicated to Madame C——, she was amazed, and could with difficulty be made to believe it. It was too monstrous for belief, she thought.

But Mrs. Kedar reminded her daughter of what she had first told her the night Ariadne appeared at the Fancy Ball, when her instinct had not deceived her as to the *motive* of her neice's coming. Miss Kedar tried to control her feelings; she endeavored to suppress the *outward* emotion from her mother's keen eye. But the effort was an unavailing one; she could not do it; she suffered too much. Madame C—— and her daughter would have offered their sympathy, but they felt that it would be a greater insult on this occasion than utter silence, and knowing that the mother and daughter would feel more at ease alone, they returned to town; Mrs. Kedar promising her friends to follow soon, also, and bring Alexanderina with her.

The lady and her daughter remained alone at Paradise. They talked continually of this unfortunate affair, and tried to fathom the *motives* of Lord Falmouth's conduct in engaging himself to her, and then deserting her for her cousin.

When, in fact, there were no motives at all. It resulted in caprice alone; in the fact of Ariadne being the most beautiful and the most artful.

At first, the young lady grieved constantly, but, at length she learned to conceal her emotions, and, as the fall approached (the time for their return to town) she had resumed her wonted manner and behavior. How to break the strange news to her beloved father, troubled her most; but her mother had already arranged that, by writing to him all the circumstances, and he was prepared to meet them when they came.

Mrs. Kedar had great difficulty in persuading the angry husband and father from asking out Lord Falmouth, and demanding a personal explanation of his conduct, but the prudent wife convinced him, that, as the engagement was only known to a very few, it would be wiser to pass it

over in silence, rather than disgrace their daughter by having it known that she had been wooed and deserted, and after execrating him to his satisfaction, the enraged Vice-President abided by her advice.

The Vice-President's daughter again made her appearance among her friends, and, to a casual observer, her look and manner was the same as it had been the spring before, but a physiognomist might have seen traits of suffering and sorrow on that calm, quiet face, and, although her manner was as polite as ever, yet, within, her heart felt crushed and dead, like a volcanic eruption that has overrun a beautiful land of flowers with burning lava, leaving that all desolate which a moment before was blooming and gay. So felt she as she pursued her usual house avocations, and tried to deceive her fond mother into the belief she had forgotten him. She only hoped, now that all ties were severed, that they would not come to town to be married. She wished *that* trial might be spared her, and it *was*.

Lord Falmouth, and Ariadne, sensible that they should insult the deserted one by being married in Washington, were privately wedded at the Villa, the family party alone being the witnesses of the ceremony.

The father and mother of Ariadne were enchanted at their daughter's prospects, and still more pleased at having taken away the lover of her cousin.

Lord Falmouth and his bride, two weeks after their marriage, departed for Europe, it being his intention to visit the Continent before he returned to England definitely to reside; and Ariadne, triumphant with success, and radiant with beauty, left the hills of Washington, the tranquil shores of the Potomac, where her childhood had been spent, the hundred associations of years, and her own hearthstone, with a foreign husband, for a foreign home; and I doubt if, in the

strange infatuation in which he was beguiled, the bridegroom once thought of the deserted heart his neglect had blighted.

I must pass over two years. It is but a mote in the sun of time; it is less than nothing in the lapse of years.

In an elegant apartment, in one of the fashionable houses, in a fashionable street of Paris, sat a beautiful woman, in a morning dress, indolently lounging in an arm-chair. Her hair was in a very disheveled condition, and her naked feet were thrust into Turkish slippers. A handsome, dark man, was agitatedly pacing the floor, while a nurse carried an infant round the room in her arms. The lady looked indifferent and lazy. The gentleman looked annoyed and out of humor, and now and then the nurse said "hush," in her endeavors to keep the child still.

"Why don't you take that child yourself?" at length said the gentleman, impatiently. "No one can take care of a child so well as its own mother, and yet you seldom touch it or attend to it."

"Mary can attend to it just as well as I. Besides, I can't bear to be a slave to children," said the lady, indolently.

The gentleman seemed about to speak, when a waiting maid entered, with a dress in her hands, to ask her mistress something about the trimming. At this question, the lady's face brightened greatly, and she aroused herself from her apparent lethargy, to reply to the girl. "Yes, I want the braiding down before, and the lace on the shoulders. Mind, and have it done in time," was the command, and the girl left the room.

"Yes; nothing but dinner parties, new dresses, and all other gew-gaws. I wish to ask you, Ariadne, if this is the way you intend spending your life in future?"

"Why, it's as good a way to spend it, I think, as any other," she answered, languidly. "I don't see that those wives who immolate themselves to house affections, as they are called, are any happier or better off than those who dissipate their time away; and I have only *one* life. I can't afford to throw it away in nothingness."

"And you call a respectable life nothingness, do you?" he sternly demanded.

"Pray, what is your criterion of respectable life?" asked his wife.

"Well, I will give you a capital example in your cousin, Alexanderina."

Ariadne's eyes darted fire, as she satirically replied: "Why you astonish me, Lord Falmouth, at your late appreciation of my cousin's merits. Had it not been your own choice you might have had the *beau* ideal always before you."

"Say, rather, that a blind infatuation made me overlook her; but all that is past," he added with a painful expression. "It is useless to look back."

"Very true," said she, disdainfully; "and that is why I wish we would live as quietly as possible, notwithstanding you have found that you have married a *human being*, instead of a *sun-beam*."

"Yes, and a miserable one at that; but I do not wish to quarrel, but merely to tell you that you *must* retrench some of your expenses, which I cannot and *will* not liquidate, and, also, prepare to set out for the United States within a week."

"The United States," cried she, with a start of unfeigned surprise. "Surely you are not going there now before you return to England?"

"To England!" repeated the gentleman with a sneer, "to

England, with *you*? No, I think I had quite enough of England with you last year. I neither wish, nor intend to go home at present; I am going to Washington."

"To throw yourself at the feet of my sweet cousin, and entreat her forgiveness?" asked *she* in the same scornful tone in which he had addressed her.

"No, that would be superfluous. I know her gentle spirit would not allow her to entertain malice against the meanest thing that lives. No, my object in going to see her once more, is to beg her to take care of my child, which I wish educated in a proper manner, and to leave it with her."

"You, Lord Falmouth, intend taking my own infant away from me, and giving it to another to rear? We shall see about that, sir. If you suppose that I will submit to such a thing, you are vastly mistaken."

"You shall do as I say, Madame. There is no *will* in this family but mine. You are as defenceless as a fly," was his severe rejoinder to the astonished woman. Then, turning to leave the room, he stopped and took the child in his arms, and kissing it, said:

"Poor little one, before many weeks I will place you with one that *will be* a mother to you," and he quitted the chamber.

His wife then went into a fit of hysterics, sobbed, moaned, called him a hardened wretch, vowed she would *not* go to America, wished she never had been born, cursed her cousin, and finally fell down on the floor totally exhausted from her efforts. Her maid hastened to soothe her by flattery, a medicine Ariadne never was averse to.

"Ah now, my lady, don't cry your beautiful eyes out because my Lord is so barbarous. Come, now, do get up; I'm sure you've no lack of heart, and if *he* don't love you,

somebody else will. Count Giorgi, I'm sure, would give his eyes to have you for a wife; but these Englishmen have no taste. You ought to have married an Italian; *they* know how to appreciate women like you. Come, my lady, do now, get up."

Ariadne presently allowed herself to be coaxed upon her feet again, and she sat down in her chair, while the maid smoothed her hair, pouting forth her wrongs.

"He says, Minnette, that when we get to the United States he will take away my child, and give it to an odious cousin of mine, living there, to bring up. Oh, only think how dreadful."

"Never mind about him or the child either, my lady. Children are plentiful in the world, and your husband don't appreciate you, that every one knows. What would you say, my lady, if I were to tell you that I have a dear little note in my pocket from Count Giorgi."

"From him! Oh give it me quick, Minnette. The dear man; *he*, at least, does not abuse me; there are some charming men in the world, I do believe; and tell Mary to put the child away, its crying disturbs me so."

The infant and its nurse were sent away, and Lady Falmouth, alone with her confidential maid, opened the note and devoured the contents. It was written on rose-coloured paper, and ran as follows:

"My adored Signora, one who admires you more than words can express, craves the honor of being admitted to your divine presence at the earliest moment you can name."

"Oh, I will see him to-morrow," said she, as she folded up the epistle, and put it in her bosom. "How did you get the letter, Minnette."

"Why, my lady, the Count slipped it into my hand this morning, and begged me not to let your husband see it."

"Oh, my husband would not care anything about it, if he had seen it. There is very little love between us now; but this idea of being dragged off to the United States, instead of going to England, as I expected, distracts me."

"Why don't you run away, my lady, with the Italian Count; my Lord don't care a straw about you, and I'm sure the Count does. I think he's the very man to make you happy."

"Hush, Minnette, don't talk so to me," said her mistress, deprecatingly, "I am a married woman."

"Well, my lady, what difference does it make, I should like to know? Other ladies are admired by other gentlemen, when their husbands don't attend to them, and I'm sure I don't see why the most beautiful lady in all Paris shouldn't."

"Never mind now, Minnette, don't talk any more now; I must get ready for dinner, I will see him to-morrow. I cannot to-day, I have so many things to think of. You can go, Minnette. I want to be alone awhile."

The girl left her, and the wayward woman sank in a chair with oppressed *thought*.

CHAPTER X.

THE ELOPEMENT.

AND this was the marriage which commenced so brightly two years before. Yes, two years had sufficed to rob Ariadne of all the false brilliancy in which his excited fancy had arrayed her, and to show her as she really was, a vain, indolent, capricious beauty, spoiled by indulgence.

At first, he only thought her wayward, but as the novelty of possession wore off, and he longed to find her a consolation and an admirer, and discovered only an adorer of fashion's follies; then he began to think, perhaps, he had been deceived. Time only convinced him of this, only showed her character more completely, and Lord Falmouth mourned, too late, his infatuation. Then he turned to the child for comfort, and sometimes in listening to its baby prattle, he imagined it bore a resemblance to Alexanderina. To her his thoughts constantly reverted, and he longed to get back again to the United States, and place the infant under her care to educate.

At Paris, from her husband's rank, Ariadne mingled in all the gaiety of the town. By some, she was adored, by all admired for her great beauty; and the startling announcement that she must leave for the United States, and lose all this brilliancy and pleasure, rendered her miserable; but, she knew by experience, that, although amiable and lenient, there was a point at which Lord Falmouth paused, and the

stern manner in which he had addressed her, convinced her that he was decided, and she was left to nurse her own bitter thoughts. If Ariadne had taken an impartial self-retrospection she would have found that, neither as daughter nor wife, had she done her duty. She would have seen that she had been selfish and negligent in all the social relations of life, that she had thought only of herself, cared only for herself. Her transient attachment to her husband had been founded more on a desire to rival her cousin, than from any real love she bore Lord Falmouth, and two years had completely killed that love. It was entirely dead and gone, and so was his. In public, they kept up a show of fondness that was only a mask. In private they were cold and indifferent to each other. She was consoled with balls and entertainments. He also sought amusement; but, being a man of intense feelings and elevated mind, he found but little in the "heaven of fools" to amuse or captivate him. He longed to find a companion at home; some one who was not a doll or plaything, but a reasonable, reflecting woman, who could understand and sympathize with him. Such was not Ariadne; she had no sympathies for any but herself.

The day after the foregoing scene, I have described, found Lady Falmouth splendidly dressed, seated on a sofa in her parlor, conversing with a tall, slender, dark-eyed Italian, whom she called Count Giorgi. She looked ruffled in temper, and the Italian seemed endeavoring to soothe her disturbed soul.

"Ah, mia cara, Ariadne, do not look so grieved, it wounds my very soul. What can I do to amuse you? Pray tell your devoted slave."

"Ah, my dear Count, I am miserable. I don't think that anything could amuse me," said she, assuming those plaintive airs which she had found so successful with her own husband.

"Ah, tell me what it is that preys upon your mind?" he again tenderly demanded; "I fear your husband is not the right man for you. Is it so?"

She made no reply, but dropped her head, with its long falling curls, on her hand, pensively. Her admirer threw himself at her feet and clasping his hands looked up into her face.

"Ah, Ariadne, how happy I could make you, were I your husband, and we lived at one of my Villas among the Pyrenees, away, far away, from all others, alone by ourselves. We should be happy as the day is long."

"Ah, yes," sighed Ariadne, "if circumstances were only different."

"Well, let us make them different, let us run away together. In Italy, none will know that you have been married, and we shall be happy."

Ariadne started, and gazed on him fixedly for a moment. She seemed debating the subject in her own mind. Anything of a wild, unprecedented character, charmed her lawless spirit, but she dreaded the consequences. Then she thought of her child; was it right to desert that infant? But then her husband had already told her that he should take away the babe, when they returned to the United States. All these thoughts chased each other through her mind, as she sat there.

The Count took both her pretty hands; still Ariadne moved not. She was in deep thought.

"Ah, speak to me one little word, to tell me you are not angry with me," said he, entreatingly.

"Count, I am miserable this morning. I am no company for you. Come to me this evening. I will see you then."

"Cannot I console you now?" urged he.

"No, no. I must be alone now. Farewell till this evening, my dear Almini."

A request from Ariadne was equivalent to a command, and the reluctant admirer went away.

Then, as soon as the door had closed behind him, she sprang to her feet, and began an agitated walk.

"Now is the time: here is an opportunity of escape from him. I no longer care for him, and he cares nothing for me. I can fly with this man to Italy, and live in wealth and splendor with him. He can give me a palace, slaves to attend me, every wish of my heart can be gratified. Shall I, or shall I not?"

She paused, clinched her fists, upturned those large blue eyes, as if she had inwardly resolved something, and rushed from the room.

A large dinner party was given that afternoon by one of the nobility of Paris. Lord and Lady Falmouth were invited, and she was obliged to calm her excited mind sufficiently to appear gay and agreeable at the entertainment.

Wherever she went, her beauty and wit attracted universal attention from the men, and envy from the women. For neither cared she much: she had become reckless, or rather time and opportunity had developed a latent indifference.

After the dinner was over, however, and she and her husband had driven home silently side by side, she went to her parlor to await the Count, while he turned to the nursery to look at the child. Lord Falmouth never interfered with his wife concerning her visitors or engagements. She came and she went; she saw this one and that one; she did as best pleased her, unmolested. She knew this, and it piqued her, too. To be treated with silent contempt is the most galling way of being treated.

She had determined that day, however, on leaving him,

and consequently cared little what her husband thought, and she was sunk in reverie when the Count stood beside her.

"You look more cheerful, dear lady, than you did this morning," was his remark, as he sank beside her on an ottoman.

"Do I, my dear friend. It is your beloved society that has restored me, then, if I look so."

"And I would strive that you should always look so, if you were only mine."

"I am yours, then," said she, softly.

"Mine! Oh, will you fly with me to Italy; to my own sunny land?"

"Yes! we will go together. I told you I would tell you this evening. I have decided, and it is to go. I have no one to care for me: you love me; I will fly with you."

"How happy we shall be. I will take you to my Villa in the mountains, and it shall be a perfect earthly paradise for you."

At the word "Paradise," she shuddered; it recalled the "Paradise" of home, where she had dwelt, and all the scenes connected with her marriage arose before her at the name. Where was that home now? Did her parents still dwell there, or were they gone away to some other place? She had not heard from them for months, and now, perhaps, that she was about to take this step, she probably never would again; but this transient feeling of remorse fled by. Ariadne was too bold and reckless to care much for the opinion either of parents or friends.

The Count and Ariadne remained together that evening, and when he left at ten o'clock, they had made arrangements for their elopement the following day.

As she went to her room that night, Lady Falmouth passed her husband's. The door was ajar, and looking

through, she saw him on his knees beside the cradle of the child. He had been praying audibly, and she heard the concluding words, "Oh, great God, my heavenly father, grant it may never live to be like her."

She was struck to the heart's core, not with sorrow, but anger. How dared he pray that her infant daughter never should be like her! This expression, which would have softened the soul of a less reckless woman, only the more confirmed her in her determination. She grew pale with rage, but suppressing any outward emotion, muttered to herself,

"No matter, it is the last time," and swept loftily to her own room.

Lord Falmouth was absent from his house during the whole of the following day. When he returned in the dusk to his home, he thought it unusually still, for his wife generally had many visitors, which made it very gay. No carriages were before the door, no servants in the hall. He concluded she was out, and without going to see, (for they seldom saw each other, except when going in public together,) he went to his own room to see his child, when one of the servants gave him a letter, which, he said, his mistress had bade him give his master.

"Where is your mistress?" asked Lord Falmouth.

"I don't know, my Lord, she is gone away."

"Away! Where to?"

"I don't know that either, sir. All I know is that I saw her go this morning in a carriage with a gentleman."

Lord Falmouth went to his room, and impatiently broke open the letter. He started with surprise as he read its contents:

"I have left you forever: consider me as no longer your wife,
ARIADNE."

He crushed the paper in his hand, and exclaimed, in that tone of deep feeling which only those who have really suffered, can ever express:

"And it is thus that the delusion of two years ends, like all other delusions, in disappointment. It is thus that my hopes, like castles in the air, are shivered into atoms. It is thus that my feelings recoil upon themselves to be absorbed in gloom. And thus the play ends. Oh, God!"

He strode from the apartment, and his face grew paler, even than usual, and his dark eyes flashed fire. There was something, too, in the quiver of his lips, that told how deeply the wound bled. Although experience had showed him what she was, although he no longer loved her, yet this willful desertion, in spite of himself, pained him: he felt wretched.

He had no difficulty in tracing Count Giorgi as the lover with whom she had flown. His friends advised him to save his honor and his ancient name, by getting a divorce, and abjuring her forever. He did so. All Paris sympathized with him; all condemned her. What consolation was the idle talk of a curious multitude to the broken-hearted man, to the betrayed husband, the unhappy father, left alone with his infant daughter, in a foreign land. For their opinions he cared not. In the solitude of his house, he sat him down by his desolate hearthstone. He thought how different might have been his fate had he married Alexanderina. He recalled her confiding gentleness, her abnegation of *self*, her continued devotion to her mother and her younger sisters, her ever-gushing tenderness, and the thousand intellectual graces that hovered round her. Then he looked upon the other picture. What had been his married life? He had married a splendid beauty, a talented woman, too, but wayward, spoilt by indulgence, selfish and indolent. Had he

ever experienced during his married life any delightful interchange of thought and feeling, such as he might have felt had he married Alexanderina.

No! From the moment of their marriage to that of their separation, all had been excitement, riot and confusion; if, sometimes, he wished to pass a quiet evening at home with his wife, she was engaged for the Opera. If he wished to read to her from some favorite author, she was arranging a new dress for a ball. It was in vain to appeal to her feelings, to surrender this artificial life. Ariadne had no feeling, as I have said before, but for herself. When the allurements of his attachment wore off, Lord Falmouth became utterly disgusted, and gave up the attempt in despair. The birth of their daughter made no change in the mother's life. She continued as gay, as full of levity as ever. She felt no sympathy for the child, and it was consigned to the care of nurelings. But the father loved the little one, and it grew and prospered, and when he gazed upon its azure eyes, he thought it resembled Miss Kedar, and he resolved to return to that distant land, and confide the infant to her care. He longed to tell her how much he had suffered, how sincerely he had repented his folly. The elopement of Ariadne only hastened the execution of his plan, and a few weeks after her desertion, he departed for America, to the regret of all his friends, who deplored his absence.

CHAPTER XI.

REMEMBRANCES.

ONCE, again, let us re-visit Paradise. Is it as beautiful as it was when Lord Falmouth walked through the shady aisles of trees hand-in-hand with Alexanderina; and are its inmates as they were then? Do the flowers bloom as freshly, and the birds sing as sweetly as in those days? Or, are all changed? are all gone? or, are they dead? Let us see.

There seems to be some alteration in the habits of the family; for the long French windows which used to be opened on the lawn, and in the evening showed the bright lights of the drawing-room are now tightly closed. Not a ray of light issues thence. The hum of voices, which used to sound about the house, is heard no more. All is hushed and still. The clean, smoothed gravel-walks also look neglected, and the box-wood untrimmed. As the bright moonlight flits through the trees, you can see that the flower-beds are overgrown with weeds. What can these signs of decay mean?

Is this fairy-like country-seat, which used to be the abode of a happy family, and numerous gay guests, suddenly deserted; or, has Death been here?

A light gleams suddenly through the windows; presently a door opens, and a female form comes forth, with a light in her hand. She is clothed in white, and she shields the flickering taper with her hand, as she slowly glides over the grass like a phantom. She pursues her way to the

end of the garden; there she pauses before—a tomb! Who is this woman, who comes at this hour to a grave? And what grave is this? who is interred here?

She sets down the light, and kneeling before the tomb, clasps her hands, and bows her head, as if in prayer. As the light falls on her face, we see that it is Miss Kedar—it is Alexanderina! At whose grave does she kneel? A simple inscription tells that that beloved mother to whom she was a companion for so many years, and whose loss she now so bitterly grieves, sleeps in dust, and her daughter, with pious care, prays over her grave.

The expression of her features, as she raises her eyes to the broad expanse above her, is that of profound devotion. Heaven itself could not endow a countenance with more loveliness and faith than her's. There is a rapt extacy in her eye, a hallowed hope in her face, which cannot be described. Thus she remains motionless, inspired, and silent, for some time, while the flickering light plays over her face, and the wind plays through the forest trees.

A half hour, perhaps, elapses before she arouses herself from thought; then she takes up the light, and pensively and slowly returns to the house, frequently turning ere she enters, to look at that grave.

She passes through the lobby, and enters the same drawing-room where Lord Falmouth and herself had so often talked together. No other light is there but the one she carries; she places it upon a table, then she seats herself, and, leaning her head on her hand, seems to think. The furniture of the room remains the same, the mirrors hang in the same position, and the chairs sit in the same places.

The inanimate objects seem to remind the young lady of something, for she looks around wistfully, then she leans her head on her hand and weeps.

Presently, the door slightly opens, and an aged negroess enters. Seeing her mistress in this attitude of grief, she pauses at the threshold, mutely sympathizing in the expression of her face; still her mistress neither hears nor sees her. The domestic advances, and kneeling by her side endeavors to draw those tiny hands from her face. The lady starts, and looks round; she sees the old woman, and a melancholy smile steals over her sad countenance.

"Ah, my dear Miss Allie, why do you weep so much?" asked the old nurse.

"Have I not had enough to make me weep?" asked her mistress, sadly.

"Ah, yes, my dear lady, indeed you have; but it's no use to cry. Your dear mother is gone from us, to be sure; but your father is left. Pray, do not weep any more."

"It is not that *alone* makes me grieve," exclaimed Miss Kedar, as she gazed around the room so fraught with reminiscences of her lover.

The old nurse caught the glance of her eyes. She knew of whom she thought, for she had been at Paradise when Lord Falmouth was there; and the tears started to her eyes as she reflected how cruelly her mistress had been treated.

"Never mind, my dear young lady, better times will come yet, I know; don't fret any more," said she, as she saw the tears still dropping from her mistress's cheeks.

"I am afraid not. Mamma has been dead six months, and there seems no change for me."

"Why, my dear lady, you can go to the Springs, and be a belle, if you choose; and your father will provide plenty of beaux for you."

"Oh, dear, I have no such ambition. To be a belle would not give me the slightest pleasure. I would rather

stay here, where my dear mamma is buried, and look at her grave sometimes, and take care of my sisters."

But sure you will ruin your health by fretting so much, dear Miss Allie. Why not open the house, and have company to amuse you, as you used to have when Mistress was living."

I could not do justice to any society, Juda; I am too much pre-occupied. No, my good nurse, let me live as I now live—alone; it suits me best."

At this moment, the drawing-room door again unclosed, and a beautiful child came running in, exclaiming:

"Oh, dear sister, I am so tired. Annie and I have been playing till we are nearly dead, and now I want to go to bed."

"Do you, my dear child?" said Miss Kedar, taking the little one in her arms. "Well, you shall have Juda to attend you. Where is Annie and Christina?"

They are up stairs, in mamma's room," said the child. "At least," she added, correcting herself hastily, "in what used to be mamma's room; for mamma has no room now," and the child's face saddened.

"No, our dear mother has no room now, love, but the cold, dark earth," said her sister, clasping her in her arms, and kissing her.

"But shall I not see mamma again some day, Allie," wistfully demanded the child.

"I hope so, love,—in heaven."

"Where is heaven? What is it? Where does it lie?"

"We none of us can know that; we must wait and hope to attain it, at least, when we die."

"But will it be a long time before I do that?"

"Do what?"

"Why, die, and go to heaven."

"God alone knows when we shall die, love. We must await our destiny, but when we do, I trust we shall meet the spirit of our dear mother, in another and a better land. And, now, go to bed, Juda will accompany you."

The child reluctantly quitted her sister's lap, took the hand of her nurse, and left the room. The aged domestic sorrowfully regarding her as she went away.

Then Miss Kedar seated herself at the center-table, and drew from her bosom a miniature, set in gold and brilliants. She bent over it, and by the light of the lamp, gazed long and wistfully upon it. A painful expression took possession of her countenance; to this succeeded one of sadness, but, at last a smile broke through the gloom, and replacing the picture, in her bosom, she took up the light, and left the apartment.

We find our gentle heroine alone at Paradise. Her mother, then, is dead. When did she die?

Let us go back to the time when her lover married her cousin, and went to Europe. When she recovered from the shock of that unhappy affair, Alexanderina pursued her usual duties at home, and devoted herself to her invalid mother. The first bitterness of disappointment wore away, but a chilling blight still lay heavily on her soul. We generally find that sudden attachments suddenly die away; but it was not so in this case. Alexanderina had known Lord Falmouth but two months, yet he had left an impression on her mind that years could never efface.

She sought amusements in the gay world; she found it not. She endeavored to become interested in other men; the image of the absent one rose higher in her mind.

She compared his imperial presence, his splendid beauty, his elevated mind, with the common-place worldings by whom she was surrounded. She listened to their senseless

inanities, and then she recalled the liquid tones, the terse language, the vehement eloquence of Lord Falmouth.

She sometimes imagined herself his wife, always with him, ever permitted to learn something from his wisdom, ever leaning on his arm, ever gazing in his beautiful eyes; then reality aroused her from these dreams; then she looked around her; then she wept.

So a year passed away, when Mrs. Kedar, whose health had been wretched for sometime, suddenly died; and Alexanderina, was left entirely alone with her younger sisters; for her father, constantly engaged in the vortex of politics, could scarcely spare time to mourn his wife's loss, although he deeply regretted her.

According to her urgent wish, she was buried in the garden at Paradise; and when circumstances allowed her, Miss Kedar passed all of her time at the Villa.

She spent hours at the tomb of that parent, who, when living, had been to her such a devoted mother. She daily invoked, from the shades of eternity, that blessed spirit to guard and cherish her and her infant sisters.

When the Vice-President sometimes run down to Paradise, and found his daughter either weeping or silently regretting her mother's loss, he would endeavor to persuade her to mingle in the gaities of Washington, to distract her thoughts from these painful recollections. He talked to her of celebrity for her talents, of a fine settlement by marriage; but at the word marriage, she instinctively shrunk back, and begged him not to mention it; and fame had few attractions for her retiring spirit.

Her indulgent father, seeing her determined to remain in seclusion, finally allowed her to do as she pleased, and she continued her quiet life of regular monotony.

The days went and came; she scarcely knew how they passed. She superintended the education of her younger sisters, and busied herself in household affairs; but even then many long hours each day hung heavily on her hands, hours when she thought, that invisible visitor which she wished to overcome, yet, like the skeleton at the feast, thought would obtrude itself, and it always made her sadder.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RETURN.

THE day after the night we had seen her at her mother's tomb, Miss Kedar was in the school-room, with the children and their tutor, hearing their lessons, when a landeau and four horses came whirling past the window of the school-room. The children and Alexanderina only caught a glimpse of it and of two postillions following at the top of their speed, ere it was gone, and they were wondering who could have come to the Villa, when Juda entered and said a gentleman was in the drawing-room, and wished to see her mistress.

"Who is it? Do you know, Juda? Who can it be! I would rather not see any one to-day. Cannot you excuse me? Ask the gentleman's name."

These exclamations and interrogations Alexanderina poured forth, ere her servant could reply. Presently Juda answered,

"It is a gentleman, Miss. He wishes to see you immediately. He did not give his name."

"I wonder who it can be. I must go, I suppose," said Miss Kedar, rising from her seat, and giving the book she held in her hand to the tutor. "Some gentleman, I suppose, with a message from papa. Now, Amina," said she, turning to the child who came to her the night before, in the drawing-room, "be sure and know your lessons well to recite to

your teacher, and you, too, dear ones," to the others, "be ye also diligent."

"Oh, do come back to us soon, dear Allie," was the general exclamation, as she left the room.

The drawing-room shutters were closed, as they had generally been since Mrs. Kedar's death. Consequently, the light came dimly into the room, and Alexanderina had stepped into the centre of the apartment, ere she discovered her visitor.

He was standing with his back towards her, by the fireless grate, leaning against the mantel-piece, and apparently looking into the mirror, which hung over it. She coughed slightly to attract his attention. The gentleman started, and turning suddenly round, she beheld—Lord Falmouth.

Yes, there, right before her, she beheld the idol of her dreams, her faithless lover; the man who from the first moment she saw him, never had been one moment absent from her thoughts. The one whom it might truly be said, had become embodied in her soul—a part of herself; he lived in her mind; and now she saw him again, or did she dream? or was it a vision of the dead.

She held her breath. She could not speak. She was too agitated to scream. For a moment, neither moved, and again the glorious light of those dark eyes were fixed upon her. He was the first to recover from the surprise, and taking one step towards her, he said, mournfully,

"It is thus we meet again, Alexanderina."

"Oh, do I see you," cried she, forgetting everything in her joy at beholding him once more. "Is it really you, Lord Falmouth, or do I dream?" and she stepped toward him. He advanced, and took both hands in his. She allowed him to do so. She seemed to have lost all consciousness of identity, to have forgotten time and place, and

where she was. He drew her to a sofa, and she sat down beside him.

"I have come back, my darling one. The wicked one has returned at last. I ought to receive curses, instead of this cordial reception. I have been a villain."

Miss Kedar raised her limpid blue eyes to his, bathed in tears. In their pellucid rays, you might have read what she felt, as she replied,

"Oh, don't speak of the past. All that is over. Let it be forgotten. Let me tell you how glad I am at your return."

"Glad at my return, are you, kindest and best of woman kind! And am I not glad to come back to throw myself at your feet, and ask to be forgiven?"

He then rapidly detailed what had occurred since his departure for Europe, and finished by telling her that he had brought his child to her care.

Astonishment held Alexanderina spell-bound, when he informed her of Ariadne's elopement.

"Left you, *you*, for an Italian? left you forever! Oh! I cannot credit it!" she exclaimed.

"It is but too true; she has gone forever. Now, I have a divorce from her; I shall see her no more. Oh, God! have I not had enough to make me repent my folly, and have I not sincerely regretted it, my Alexanderina?"

And he again pressed those small hands in his, and this time he ventured to kiss her white, smooth, intellectual forehead; then, glancing at her sombre dress, he asked for whom she was in mourning.

"My mother is dead," replied the young lady, sadly.

"And after I left you, she probably hated me, did she not, and taught you to do the same, my Alexanderina?"

"Oh, no, my Lord, my dear departed mother never hated anything in her life. She grieved, it is true, at past events, but she never expressed herself violently. Since her death, I have been so lonely that the sight of you rejoices me, and, oh! how pleased would she be, too, were she living now."

"I am afraid, with all her benevolence, she would despise me heartily. But," he suddenly remarked, "you must have many admirers who sometimes wean you from these sad thoughts. You will probably marry, and a husband will take the place of your mother in your heart."

"Marry!" cried Miss Kedar, in amazement, while a pang of agony shot through her heart, at his apparent indifference. "Oh, no, my fate is sealed in that respect. I shall never marry. I told my mother so on her death-bed. I tell my father so every day."

"Does he wish you to wed any one?" asked Lord Falmouth, looking at her with his piercing dark eyes.

"He often wishes me to choose some one and marry. He thinks that the contingencies of life are less in the married than single state," replied the young lady.

"And of whom do you think in relation to that condition?" said he, almost sternly.

"I! think of any one! Have I not already said that I should never wed. I see no one that interests me."

"Yes, I know that there are few worthy of you, or suited to you, my good Alexanderina, but you ought to marry. If I were worthy of you, I would try and make you care, but I dare not. I have acted like a villain toward you. I must not say what my heart prompts me to say. I must be silent, and be contented to see you sometimes; to be a friend to you only."

His face saddened, and dropping the hand he held in his,

he seemed to ponder. Miss Kedar laid her hand on his; she looked at him with those eyes of truth and devotion which never had deceived.

"Oh, banish, my dear friend, banish from your memory these unhappy recollections. Come and live at Washington; my father, myself, dear Madame C——, and our numerous friends will once again surround you. We will form one happy family together. You and I will be like brother and sister——" here she paused, and trembling, she blushed, for she caught a side-long glimpse of his impassioned glances."

"We never can be like brother and sister to each other, Allie. I do not love you with a brother's love. I should only be deceiving myself and you, if I thought I could see you every day, and still only regard you as a sister. Did I love you as a sister, when I hung around you here two long, unhappy years ago? Were my actions like the calm, unimpassioned interest a brother takes in a sister? Were they?"

"Oh, no, indeed," was her eager reply: "but——"

"I know what you would say," said he, anticipating her. "Those times are fled. You wish me to understand that in future, our relations can only be those of friendship. Well, I acknowledge the reproof. I have richly deserved it. I preferred your worthless cousin to you; you have a right to disdain me."

"I disdain you! Oh, my Lord, how can you say so? Have I reverted to the past in anger, and if either should feel resentment, surely I have the better right to do so?"

She withdrew her hand from his, and proudly drew herself up, as she made the reply.

But a wild war of feeling was raging in Lord Falmouth's breast. Remorse at his former actions, which the sight of this amiable woman only served to heighten, the love which

had revived in his soul for all her virtues, the dishonor which his shameless wife had heaped upon him, all these thoughts rushed through his mind like torrents.

He rose abruptly from his seat, and began pacing the room with disordered steps.

Presently, he stopped before the young lady, who sat still, silently weeping.

"You weep, Miss Kedar, your eyes weep pearly tears, but my heart has wept invisible drops of blood, since I saw you. Oh, how different might have been my lot, had I not been blinded by an absurd infatuation," he exclaimed, clasping his hands to his brow. She looked up through her tears; their eyes met—they felt that they loved each other still. What mattered the past! He was her idol, her only love. She had loved him through perfidy, through absence, through trials, which would have shaken the attachment of other women into atoms. He had come back to her; he asked to be forgiven, to be taken back again to her heart, and he was forgiven. Almost unconsciously he fell upon his knees, he extended his arms to the true-hearted girl, she saw his eyes beaming with tenderness, she forgot everything except that he was there before her, and she fell into them; and as they fervently enfolded her, he murmured:

"Will you be mine, love?" she answered not, save by uplifting to his, her azure eyes, and in their sincerity and hallowed love, he read his destiny.

CHAPTER XIII.

EXPLANATIONS.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT and our lovely friend, Madame C—— who had been a second mother to Alexanderina since her mother's death, and all the other friends who knew and loved her, all these were apprized of the strange facts relating to Lord Falmouth. Some blamed, some pitied, but all praised the Vice-President's daughter. The town, for a week, was absorbed in speculation and talk concerning Lady Falmouth's elopement from her husband, and all the circumstances relating to it were detailed and amplified, until the subject was worn literally thread-bare. Then gossip stopped, not for the want of inclination to talk, but absolutely for the want of something to talk about, and some other piece of scandal claimed the public attention, and Lord Falmouth and his treacherous wife were forgotten.

Ariadne's parents no longer dwelt at "Doux Repos." Within the first year after their daughter's marriage, they had removed to an estate he owned in the northern part of Ohio, so they did not hear of their daughter's conduct for some time after Lord Falmouth's arrival at Washington. When at last they did hear of it, it was with feelings of the deepest mortification and regret, for although vain and worldly, they were not desperate, and utterly lost to pride and shame. They endeavored to ascertain to what place in Italy she had flown with the Count, but in vain. She had succeeded in enveloping herself in so much mystery, that

every trace was lost; they never saw, nor heard of their beautiful, but erring child again.

Meanwhile, a day or two after Lord Falmouth arrived at Paradise, the Vice-President and Madame C—— came to the Villa. Madame had not been there since the death of Mrs. Kedar, and the place had many saddening associations for her. She now came to see Alexanderina, and to persuade her to visit Washington, at least for a week or two, and shake off her depressing feelings.

When the party arrived, at twilight, they found the children playing on the lawn, and, on entering the drawing-room, found Lord Falmouth and Miss Kedar seated side-by-side. As yet, neither the Vice-President nor the Ministress knew of Lord Falmouth being there. He had arrived at Paradise, (it was indeed a Paradise to him!) he stopped at a forest inn near the Villa, and there had not been time enough for the news to reach Washington that he was there. Mr. Kedar knew nothing of it; when, therefore, he and the lady entered, struck with astonishment at the sight of that which they could not comprehend, they stood in silent amaze. The lady recovered herself first, and exclaimed: "What strange necromancy has been going on here? What do I behold! Is it really you, Lord Falmouth, or the ghost of former times come to re-visit Paradise; and you, my gentle Alexanderina, whom I left in tears and deep grief, whence comes these smiles and this joyous mien?"

The entrance of the Vice-President and Madame C——, had been so unexpected, that, for an instant, neither Lord Falmouth nor Miss Kedar could speak. Both started, and blushed, however, recollecting the familiar air they had assumed toward each other, thinking themselves alone. The manner of the charming Ministress was gay, but a heavy frown gathered on the brow of the Vice-President on seeing

the man who had so cruelly deserted his daughter again by her side.

"What, may I ask, sir, has occasioned my daughter the honor of this visit, and for what purpose?" sternly demanded he, advancing toward the Englishman.

Lord Falmouth rose from Miss Kedar's side, and turning deadly pale, confronted the angry father. Both gentlemen were angered, and a fierce retort to the rude salutation seemed starting to the lips of the nobleman, when Alexanderina, pale and trembling at this unexpected meeting, threw herself between the two men, and, hanging on her father's arm, said, "Father, dear father, forbear. He has come back to me."

"Come back to you, you silly girl, come back to you—the husband of your cousin, a man who deserted you for that flippant girl. He has come back to you, *ha, ha*; and what do *you* mean by receiving the protestations of love of a married man?"

Lord Falmouth was about to answer, but the young lady waived him back, and she replied to her angry parent, in her own liquid tones: "Father, this gentleman is no longer the husband of my cousin. She has left him—he is divorced, and has come here."

"No longer the husband of Ariadne—divorced!" ejaculated the Vice-President and Madame C——, in the same breath. "What does all this mean? Where, then, is his wife—your cousin?"

"Ariadne now lives in Italy with a Count," answered Miss Kedar, blushing at her own words, while she cast an apologetic glance at Lord Falmouth, as if to atone for what she said.

Here Lord Falmouth spoke, and taking Miss Kedar's hand in his, led her to the angered Vice-President. "It is

even as your daughter has said, sir; my wife has wronged me. She has left me forever; I am now wifeless. Knowing the character of your matchless daughter, I came from France to this Villa, which was the scene of our short courtship; of my desertion; and, I trust, of our future happiness. I came two days ago, a lonely and disappointed man; my domestic happiness was wrecked, and I felt despairing. I only brought with me my servants and my infant daughter, whom I wished to entrust to the care of your estimable daughter for education. But, when I came, I found old feelings were not dead in her heart, and we resolved to become to each other what we should have been at first—husband and wife. I am rich, she is good. We love each other. Those who love, who assimilate, generally are happy. I beg that what *has been* may *rest what has been*. I entreat you give us your blessing, sir.”

There was something so touching in the proud humility with which the nobleman spoke, and there was something so entreating in the beaming eyes of his daughter, that, almost unconsciously, the Vice-President extended his hands over their bowed heads, and breathed a blessing on their united loves.

Madame C——, as if bowing before the host, also bent her beautiful head, and a profound silence, for many moments, reigned in this strangely re-united group, and when each roused from the strange awe which enchained their souls, in the eyes of each one might have been seen a tear glistening.

“I sympathize, sir, with your sorrows,” said the Vice-President, with touching earnestness, grasping the Englishman’s hand; “I agree with you that the past shall be forgotten and forgiven; and I hope that now my daughter will experience that happiness for which she so long has

pined, and which, she always said, you *alone* could give her."

"And I," said the sweet Ministress, suddenly startling the group by her melodious voice. "What shall I say on this unexpected occasion? How shall I express the joy I feel at seeing my fair favorite looking so well and gay, when I anticipated seeing her lonely and sad, as has been too much her wont since her beloved mother's death. What shall I say to you, my Lord, who have been so strangely and mysteriously brought back to her? How shall I express my gladness of soul; at this charming re-union, when we seem all happy again together after so long a separation?"

"You must attribute it, my dear lady, to fate, which, without doubt, designed that we should be each other's joy some day; and now our destiny is fulfilled, and you, dear lady, shall be partaker of it. You shall be my wife's adviser, (nay, do not blush, my Allie,) and mine; and if my fancy ever roves in future, you shall win it back again to her to whom it is due."

"Take care," was the gay reply of the lady. "I am afraid that you will be like all others of your sex. You may require my good offices before you think, and I may find myself an impotent enchantress; but," she added, with a tender glance at Miss Kedar, "that could scarcely be with such a lovely being; and now, if your dear mother could only be returned to us, how happy we might all be."

"Oh, let us try and be happy as it is, dear Madame C——," said Alexanderina, with a sad smile; "for mamma is gone from us, and in this world we shall see her no more."

The Vice-President looked grave for a moment; though, to a great politician, to a man absorbed in actions of momentous importance, the transient affections of home are like a drop of water in the vast, unfathomable ocean. This is

ever the case with great legislators, with men whose minds are engrossed with stupendous actions, which require all their thoughts, and not unfrequently absorb and swallow up all their souls tenderness for the minor affections of life. Love to these men is the pastime of an hour; to a fond, devoted woman it is the business of a life-time. This is life.

For some moments silence fell upon the group, with their hands clasped in each other, as if they feared some untoward stroke of fate would again tear them apart. Lord Falmouth and Miss Kedar gazed into each other's eyes in rapturous silence. The Vice-President probably recalling the memory of his lost wife, was sunk in thought; and in the sparkling brown eyes of Madame C—— there stood a tear. The Vice-President was the first to break the silence; approaching them, he took their hands in both of his, and addressing himself to Lord Falmouth said:

"My Lord, I give you my daughter, and I pray that every hallowed bliss, every hope and love the human heart is capable of possessing, may be yours jointly. I trust that time, the great consoler of mankind, the panacea of life, may console you for all you have suffered. I trust that years, as they roll over your heads, may only add joys on joys; and that time, instead of diminishing, may only add brighter glory to it, is my most fervent prayer."

His voice sank into a pathetic tone as he closed this invocation. He looked at his beautiful daughter; she who had ever been to him so good a child. He felt that hereafter, another would be first in her heart; that the deep love, the anxious devotion, with which she had ever attended him would now be transferred to another; that her lover would be first in her thoughts, in her nightly dreams, and daily actions; and, notwithstanding it made him glad to

see smiles again dawn on that pensive face, which, for so long a time had not been seen to smile; yet, worldly and ambitious as he was, the parting, mentally, from the dearest object of his affections, gave him an emotion of profound sorrow. The transient look of sadness, however, passed from his face, and it again resumed the calm, impassioned expression of resolution it generally wore, and taking the hand of the Ministress, who had resumed her joyous expression of face, he laid it within his arm, and turning to Lord Falmouth and Alexanderina, he said:

“Come, let us all go to the supper-room, for I see by the light that gleams in that direction, that tea awaits us, and, in a strong cup of Bohea, we will forget our past sorrows, and promise that, if consistent with the known inconsistency of human affairs, we will be happy for the rest of our days.”

And they all left the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XIV.

LAST SCENE.

AND, now, that I have brought my gentle, my much-loved heroine, to an episode of happiness, perhaps, dear reader, I ought to leave her, knowing as you and I do, that temporal happiness is, of necessity from human organization, of limited duration,—that the blissful emotions all lovers feel when first they reciprocate their passion, like the beautiful scarlet cypress, is scarcely plucked and admired, ere the bloom of the flower is fled; and, in the place of glowing color, we see faded hues; in the place of its slender, beautiful petals, drooping leaves display themselves; all is changed and dead. And so, stern philosophers say, dear reader, it is with possession: the charms which please the lover's eye, wither in the husband's arms; the air, and trick and manner, which delighted him before he gained her, are unnoticed by him who sees them every day; and, I verily believe, many husbands and wives look at each other with astonishment, after time has dimmed the ardor of their love to ashes, and wonder what they ever could have seen to admire so much. Certainly, many grow very tired, and long to be released from the tie which has become a yoke of burden to both; yet, I hope and trust, in fact, I know and believe, that such sentiments could never find a place in the sympathetic souls of Lord Falmouth and Alexanderina. The fervor of novelty may have worn off, and their feelings may have calmed down somewhat, which is inevitably the result of all earthly emotions, but the

affinity of mind, taste, habits and pursuits must still have remained the same, and the light of their honey-moon shed its tranquil radiance over their graves.

Yet one more scene, and we leave them.

Some days after their re-union, Madame C—— and Miss Kedar were walking in the garden. They had left the Vice-President and Lord Falmouth at the dinner table, and taking advantage of the beautiful autumn sunset, arm-in-arm were promenading through the same woods which had beheld their merry revels, the night of the masquerade. The trees were as green and as beautiful as they were then, the flowers bloomed as freshly, the skies were as bright. If there was a change, it was in their saddened hearts, perhaps; not in nature; that remained the same. Perhaps recollections of those olden times came over their hearts, with mournful truth; for, with that association of time and place, which gives the tone to thought, they spoke of what had been.

A turn in the walk brought them before Mrs. Kedar's grave. Madame C—— paused, and read the simple inscription offered by a daughter to the memory of a mother; then uplifting her eyes, she beheld on top of the monument the figure of an angel, its arms crossed on its bosom, and its eyes raised to heaven, as if about to ascend to the skies.

"How beautiful that is," said the Ministress. "It seems emblematic of your mother's spirit, leaving earth and, with that faith she ever possessed, soaring to a better land."

"And so I hope that her's has soared aloft," was the tearful response of Miss Kedar; and she added, clasping her hands with earnestness. "How good she was; how well she deserved a blessed future."

The lady looked at her friend with sympathizing eyes; and wound her arms around her.

"A truce to any more sorrows and regrets, my love; your troubles are over, I trust, and a brilliant future will be yours, I know. Your dear mother, my beloved friend, from above, will look down and behold your joy; and your husband, repentant of former follies, will do every thing to make you happy; while I and my family will be witnesses and partakers of your happiness."

And Alexanderina, with a look of heartfelt thankfulness, grasped her friend's hands, and wiping the tears from her eyes, said:

"God grant it may be so!"

THE

WIFE OF TWO HUSBANDS.

BY

MISS G. G. FAIRFIELD.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1852, by

GENEVIERE GENEVRA FAIRFIELD,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Eastern
District of Pennsylvania.

WIFE OF TWO HUSBANDS.

CHAPTER I.

DARKNESS shrouded in impenetrable shades, the giant cliffs of Dover. The heavens were lowering and black; obscured by dense masses of heavy clouds, drifting hither and thither; while occasionally the sullen roar of the thunder, or the fitful gleams of lightning, alone broke the solemn stillness of the scene.

The flashes of phosphoric light revealed, beneath the towering cliffs, the surging waves, as they beat against the rocks, seeming to lash themselves to fury as the wind rose and fell, and alternately urged them onward, and repelled them, driving them in unavailing pursuit after each other along the vast, unfathomable waste of water. These mountainous waves, as they rolled onward into distance, now rising, now falling, were at length utterly lost in the immensity of that great ocean.

As the lightning traversed the sky, severing, with rude power, the purple clouds hanging so darkly and gloomily above the dark-blue ocean, those grand, tall rocks, and the town itself, it gave momentarily to view, standing near the verge of the precipice, an antique hostel, of so strange, so

old, an appearance, that it seemed the natural and privileged abode of storms and whirlwinds.

It was of the old Gothic style; and yet it looked half Venetian, with its pointed gable-ends and close lattices, now firmly shut to exclude the wind. As the gleams of light occasionally revealed it, lowering so dangerously over the dark abyss below, and separated some distance from any other house, its appearance was indeed weird and ghost-like, looking more like the phantasmagoria of a panorama than reality.

Still the wind howled, and the lightning flashed, and the thunder roared, and again the heavens opened; and this time the lurid glare showed two forms struggling against the tempest, and seeming to approach the Inn.

"Great God, what a night!" said one voice. "Never have I seen the like. No! not even in the Mediterranean."

"Did you tell me," said the other, "that a vessel was expected in to-night? If so, she will be lost utterly. No bark could live in a gale like this."

"Yes! The Saint Germain is telegraphed to arrive from France this very night."

"Oh, terrible!" ejaculated the first. "But, hark!" he cried, seizing his companion's arm convulsively. "Listen, I hear something; it sounds like a wild shriek; perhaps that was the ship in distress?"

"Pshaw, it is the stormy petrel you hear. You imagine things, my friend. It cannot be the ship. I pray to God that now she may be in safe keeping for to-night, far away from this."

"Didn't you tell me," rejoined the first, "that the Admiral expects something to arrive for him in this ship?"

"Yes, he expects some fire arms. We shall see to-morrow, when the storm clears, what has become of the Saint Germain. What a flash!" he exclaimed, as the lightning wandered over his face. "Thank God, here we are at the Inn. Open the door, quick, I am drenched with rain."

The blaze of light, as they entered, contrasting with the blank darkness without, for a moment almost dazzled them, but recovering, they looked around upon the cheerful scene that homely kitchen presented to their view.

In the centre of the broad, brick-paved room, a great fire blazed in the wide chimney, around which were grouped, in careless ease, several hardy, bold-looking sailors, interspersed with merchants, from the town of Dover, and numerous other persons of different trades, some chewing, some drinking, and merrily singing songs in praise of their loves. A fat, good-natured looking woman, bustled around, whom the sojourners called Mrs. Harding, and who was the hostess of the Inn.

As the two visitors came forward, the bright fire light showed that they wore the undress uniform of the midshipmen of the Admiralty service.

They drew chairs toward the fire, and sat down, after requesting the landlady to mix two glasses of brandy and water for them. The elder, who was tall and robust, and appeared to take the lead, unbuttoned his great coat, which was saturated with rain, and threw it on the back of a chair; laying aside his hat also, he brushed back the heavy masses of his black hair. The younger one remained silent, his hands plunged into his coat pockets, and his eyes fixed in abstraction on the brick floor.

"It's a very stormy night, sir," said one of the men seated at the fire, addressing the elder of the strangers.

"Very," answered he, quietly.

"You are from the Admiralty, I suppose, sir?" he continued. "You must have had a dreadful walk through the storm?"

"Very disagreeable," was the laconic reply, and the occupant of the chimney corner, thus repulsed in his attempts to open a conversation, became silent, as also were the strangers. The other occupants of the room, after staring a few moments, returned to their singing and talking.

The landlady now emerged from a small room, opening off a distant corner of the old kitchen, bearing on a tray the two glasses of brandy, but on seeing the strangers distinctly as she approached them, she made a profound courtesy, and, as if struck with astonishment at her own neglect, exclaimed:

"Oh, I beg pardon, gentlemen, I didn't see who you were, when you first came in. Pray walk with me, I'll show you a parlor; this is only a common place, where the sailors come."

The two officers rose, and followed her through a dark passage, and up a creaking pair of stairs, lighted by a solitary candle placed in a niche on the wall.

"It is a terrible storm!" said she, as she ushered them into a small, but comfortably-furnished room. A lamp shed a cheerful radiance around the apartment, and although no fire illuminated the scene as in the kitchen, yet its general aspect was attractive.

"There's no fire here, gentlemen, but if you would like, I'll have one made directly, for, though it's mid May, we always have fire in the kitchen, for the traders and sailors like to sit round it of a night, and tell stories."

"It makes no difference, don't disturb yourself; this will do very well as it is. We only came to your house on

business, or rather to see one with whom we have business, who is staying here, I understand; but as it is so rainy a night, I fear we will be obliged to remain till morning. There seems no prospect of it's clearing."

"No, sir," said the loquacious hostess, going to the window. "It's raging worse than ever. I should not wonder if it lasted for several days: these gales of Dover often do. Maybe you won't be thinking me over curious, if I ventured to ask who it is you wish to see that's staying here?"

"We have come from the Admiralty, especially to see a gentleman we were told we should find here, called Lord Glenfells. I wish if possible to see him to-night, for if the wind should change, the storm will abate; and we can return."

"Ah, sir, do you come to see Lord Glenfells. Well, poor gentleman—that's to say," she added, correcting herself, "he's a very great gentleman, to be sure, but then I call all people poor, who are so unhappy. He seldom leaves his room, and when he does go out, he looks as if he had lost his best friend. They say he is very great; but sure, I would rather be as I am, than as he is, and be so miserable."

"Here, my good woman," said the gentleman, who had been writing on a card, without apparently having heard her, "oblige me by taking this to the gentleman immediately, and bring me his reply. Then, if possible, get us some supper, for my long walk has made me hungry, and to all appearances we must spend the night here."

The hostess glanced eagerly at the card, as she departed with it, leaving the two tumblers of brandy and water upon the table. The younger officer drank his with avidity, then walking to the windows drew back the curtain, and seemed deeply absorbed in contemplation of the glorious scene without. The elder, although he called for the brandy left

it untasted, and continued gazing before him, as if in deep thought.

No sound was heard within the house, save the creakings of the doors and windows, as the blast shook the window glass, and made the doors swing more heavily to than usual.

Nor without could the human ear distinguish aught but the incessant roar of the whirlwind.

The landlady returned; her face was brighter than when she went.

"Sure, sir, you must be a conjurer, for the Lord Glenfells, who has denied himself to every body who wished to see him for the last month, (and that's not a few persons,) no sooner saw what you wrote on the card, than he told me to say that he would be happy to see you this evening, if you wished. Indeed, I thought he seemed quite anxious about it, so if you please, I'll show you his room now, and then go and see to having a nice supper got ready for you, and I know you'll do justice to my cookery."

"I shall be obliged to you," replied the elder officer, in a tone of courtesy. "Come my friend," addressing the other, "let us hasten to see the object of our visit, since he has given us permission to do so, and then get some refreshments and to bed, for I feel inconceivably fatigued, and the storm shall be our lullaby."

The woman preceded them to the end of the passage, when opening a door, she said, "Here, my Lord, are the gentlemen who wished to see you." A low, sweet voice said, "Bid them enter." The woman ushered them into the apartment, then courtesying, went away. The door closed behind her, and they found themselves in the presence of the stranger.

This room was elegantly furnished. A soft, delightful

light diffused itself around, from a lamp suspended above, casting circular shadows upon the heavy window curtain, the carpeted floor, and flinging full their rays upon the lone occupant, seated before a table on which was strewn some papers which he seemed to have been reading.

He was tall, finely formed, slightly athletic, and dark. The expression of his strongly marked features was sad and somewhat stern, but there was a tender light mingling with the sternness of those large dark eyes, which told of tenderness and devotion to be called forth at will. Although the severely chiseled mouth showed that at times he could be severe even to bitterness, yet the general air and manner of the stranger was benevolent.

He raised his eyes from the paper he was reading, as they entered, and rising, said, with much urbanity, "Be seated, gentlemen. I am happy to see you."

There was nothing startling in these simple words, yet the commanding, though chivalrous manner with which they were uttered, seemed to embarrass the officer, for he remained silent several minutes, then apparently rallying his self-possession, said, "Lord Hastings, sir, under whom we serve, requested me to deliver to you this evening a small package which I take pleasure in now giving you," and he gave to the stranger a small parcel which he drew from his coat pocket. It looked like a package of letters, from the exterior.

Lord Glenfells glanced at it eagerly, as if he wished immediately to open and examine the contents, but restraining his curiosity, he placed it on the table, and said, "How is my friend Hastings, Captain Lewis? I have not seen him lately."

"His Lordship is quite well, sir. He requested me to present his compliments, and hoped he should see you soon,

but if this storm in which we have been caught continues, he probably will not be able to see you very soon. This tempest may last some days."

"Ah, indeed, does it storm?" said Lord Glenfells, in a tone of abstraction.

"Why, is it possible you have not heard the raging blast? Listen, even now you can hear the thunder."

The stranger slightly turned in his chair toward the window. "Yes," he replied, "I now distinguish it; but in fact I am sometimes so pre-occupied that I know not what the weather is."

Another pause ensued. Lord Glenfells seemed abstracted as if something held his mind in thrall. Their errand being accomplished, the two gentlemen rose to go.

"I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again in the morning, I presume. You will remain here to-night, of course," he remarked, as they moved toward the door.

"Yes, sir, we shall be obliged to stay, although against our will, only having come from the Fort for the purpose of safely delivering into your hands the parcel our Commander gave me for you, and if it clears, I wish to get back as soon as possible in the morning to the Admiralty."

"Do not go, I request, before I see you; I may wish to return a reply by you. And now allow me to wish you pleasant dreams and hallowed slumbers. Good night."

He smiled. Oh! such a smile danced on his strong features, as scarcely seemed of mortal birth; and waving a farewell gracefully with his hand, the two young men withdrew, strangely, yet pleasingly impressed with their visit.

They returned to their room, where between the gossip of their hostess, who favored them with an entire detail of the stranger's daily habits, his daily conversation, of which

she seemed to retain a marvelous remembrance, and his loneliness, and apparent misanthropy. Between these details, and the fine supper, two hours passed quickly away, and then the young men retired to rest.

CHAPTER II.

AFTER the officers went away, the stranger turned quickly to the package, and tearing off the cover, with desperate haste, flung himself into a chair beneath the light, and seemed buried in the contents of the letter.

His dark eyes sometimes dilated, sometimes contracted, and his brow darkened into a frown as he read onward; then he clenched his fist on the table, and the nails of his fingers seemed to sink deep into the flesh of the palms. His action seemed so intensely fixed, it was painful.

Presently his thoughts unconsciously found vent in words. He spoke:

"Let me think; it seems to me that I have lost the power of thought. What does my friend say? where is the paper? let me read it again. I believe I am going mad, my thoughts wander so. Oh, here it is. He wishes to console me; but, alas! neither he nor any other friend can do that; the wound is deep; death alone will relieve me."

He took up the letter again, and blinding tears obscured the page, as he read the following words:

"You can act upon these suggestions of mine, or not, as you please, my dear Alexander; you know I offer them solely from the kindest of motives—the wish to win you from these unavailing regrets which are now destroying your manhood.

"In regard to *her*, I am quite certain of the correctness

of my information. She was seen in the Province of Normandy three months ago, in company with a young man of prepossessing appearance, whom she called her *husband*. Our friend recognized her immediately by the description you had given him of her, and more than all, by that splendid, that fatal beauty, which is now the cause of your sorrow. The past, my beloved friend, we can never recall, and why should you grieve away the glorious days of your youth in restless, jealous anguish, over the frailties of this lost one. True, she may be as beautiful as an houri, but the recollection of her charms is only a source of unavailing grief to you now. I had hoped that time would have consoled you, but you seem as wretched as when first it happened. Cannot I persuade you to accept my proposition, and accompany me to the Levant. There the melancholy charm of Grecian scenery perhaps may beguile some of these sad reveries away. Our government will willingly change my position, and we will immediately depart, if you consent. Think of it calmly, and tell me if you will do so.

"The Gods be with you.

HASTINGS."

The stranger still pored over the page, as if he read it mechanically, without realizing the sense of the words; then suddenly starting from his seat, he traveled the room with disordered steps; he swung his arms in air, and murmured to himself in an angry tone, as he did so. The curtain of the windows hung in heavy masses to the floor, but suddenly pausing, he seized a mass of drapery in one hand and threw it back from the window on a bracket, and then gazed wistfully upon the scene without. A change had taken place since the two officers, two hours before, had contended so manfully against the elements. The sky was brighter, but it was an ominous lightness, such as often happens during a great storm, when nature, as if exhausted, pauses

as it were, to take breath, ere she re-commences her task of carnage and death. Toward the horizon, the sky was pale, dim and ghostlike, in its misty whiteness. Nearer the centre, dark and dense clouds hid the dark blue sky. The lightning had ceased flashing, and the thunder warring. To these noisy sounds, a profound stillness had succeeded the wild war of these conflicting elements, and for a moment all nature seemed still. The landscape before the Inn, imperfectly seen by the obscured light, looked unreal and visionary, like one of those scenes one sometimes sees in dreams, which are intangible, and upon awaking we endeavor to recollect it, but the mystical semblance eludes our thought. Such an impression might this place have made upon your mind, gentle reader, had you seen it; but I doubt if the unhappy nobleman I am speaking of, saw it at all, or comprehended what it was. He still continued speaking to himself:

“He tells me to forget her; that the past can never be recalled. Oh, God! do I not know that it can never return. What would I not give to take back those fairy hours when I *knew* that she loved me, when looking in her beautiful eyes, and listening to her sweet voice, I thought I saw heaven there? Oh, yes, and I *was happy, too* happy to have it long; but those days are forever past away, all that is dust and ashes; and now I learn, after years of separation, that she is living still with another in France. Yes, she forfeited my love, disgraced my ancient name, deserted *me*, perchance for some worthless adventurer, with whom she is now living, and yet I love her still, yet I dream of her by night, and think of her all day, and even now, I suffer the agonies of jealousy I felt when she first left me. It seems to me that if I could see her *now* in all the splendor of her beauty, I would forgive her all the injury she has done me; but, oh! that can never be.”

In his strange despair, he even seemed to regret the opportunity of forgiving the unworthy one. Then, he resumed, still following the melancholy train of his thoughts, and looking on the landscape:

“Why do ye not blow, ye strange winds? Why do ye not rain, ye dark clouds? Darkness and storms suit my soul, which, dreary as those dark vapors, and lonely as the moon when she presides alone in the sky, nor cloud nor star is seen. Why was I ever born? or why do I still live, unhappy from a fatal passion which I cannot subdue, yet which I know to be wrong?”

He raised the window sash, and resting his arms on the sill, looked forth. As I said before, it was the middle of May, though they had a fire in the kitchen of the Inn, but, though all nature put forth buds and flowers in beauty, yet sometimes the air from the ocean was chill and raw, requiring, on those cold nights, large fires to render it of an agreeable temperature.

Without, on the green sward, all was bright and beautiful when the sun came with his golden rays to show it as it was. Trees and flowers, jostled each other in gay confusion, and the neat, quiet-looking houses of the town itself gave life and animation to the scene. But now the intense gloom which pervaded the sky except in one small corner in which a livid glare displayed itself, prevented the stranger from seeing the charms of nature, and he had no other view before him but the mental retrospection of his own thoughts. The faint light gleaming on the horizon's verge dimly shadowed forth the harbor and the distant ocean whose waves tossed wildly and mountainously, breaking into ragged edges of surge and foam. Beneath the cliffs they roared and plunged as if endeavoring to climb upward to the summit, while the towering cliffs above the turbulent

waters frowned darkly over them as if reproving their temerity.

Moment after moment flew away. As the stranger gazed on, a change came over the scene, the dark clouds moved away from the lower part of the sky, and, as the light gleamed through them, the dim outline of a ship might be distinguished, (so far distant that it resembled a child's toy,) buffetting the rude waves, now struggling, now turning, it seemed doomed to perdition. The sea momentarily broke over it, obscuring it altogether, and when again it rose to view, each time it looked nearer destruction.

The bark was too far distant to see the persons on it, though doubtless many unhappy beings were anxiously awaiting their doom. Presently an immense wave came and completely engulfed the ship; the sea rolled over the spot where it had struggled for life, not a sound was heard, not even a shriek, to say that life had passed away. Like a mote in the sunbeam, a drop in the ocean of time, perhaps hundreds of human souls had in that moment died, unknown, unsought for, and forgotten. The blue waves passed over the ship's dark grave as before it sunk. Again the drifting clouds darkened the sky, and cast their sombre shadows over the waters, so that they could not be seen.

"Thus it is with life," said the stranger, as he looked on the sea;" thus will it be one day with me: the sea rolls on the same as before that fated ship struck. The tide of life will still roll on the same after I am cold in death. Who knows, who cares, whether I live or die, whether I am happy or miserable; when I am dead a tombstone will mark the spot where I lie, and that will be the end; and is this all? oh, is this all?"

He raised himself from his drooping position. Withdrawing within the window, he closed it, and went to bed; even

in slumber his beautiful dark features retained their fixed expression of melancholy and sternness.

After breakfast, next morning, the young officers again waited on Lord Glenfells, according to request, and he gave them a letter to carry back to his friend, which he hastily dashed off while they waited for it. On leaving him, he cordially invited them to visit him again; and they were about to go when one of the servants of the house came running in to say that a vessel had been wrecked off the cliffs the night before. The ship has sunk, but some of the passengers were saved, having swam to the beach, and they were bringing them to the house. "Ah!" said the younger officer, "that was the shriek, I heard last night. The ship was then going ashore on the rocks; it must have been the Saint Germain which we have been expecting for some days."

"Yes; probably, after all you are right my friend," said the elder. "It *must* have been the Saint Germain. Let us go down to the beach and see if there are any traces of it, and if the crew and passengers are saved."

"Gentlemen, that is needless. I myself saw the ship go down last night," said the stranger, in a sad tone.

CHAPTER III.

THROUGH the open casement, the stars gleamed brightly on the pair so strangely re-united. They shone forth from the dark blue sky, the glorious, eternal ornaments of heaven. Bright looked they as when first placed there, and yet, how many thousands, tens of thousands, millions, had mouldered into dust since they were hung there. The air came warm, and odorous of a thousand flowers, and it played with the drapery of the windows, and lifted the hair from the cheeks of the lady.

She had pillowed her head on his shoulder, and her large blue eyes, so dreamy, so full of soul and feeling were fixed upon that sky. But *he* drooped his head upon her lap; and by the convulsive shiver that sometimes ran over him, one might easily see that he was weeping. Presently she spoke again, but her voice this time was feebler than before.

"How often have I looked on such a night as this with you years ago, when I was gay and innocent; and had any one then predicted that I should meet you thus, how skeptical would I have been; yet thus it is, and time, which should have found me wiser and better than in the days of yore, which should have confirmed me in faith and duty, only witnesses the death-bed of a faithless woman."

No—no! you shall not die; you shall not! I say it; I declare it!" frantically cried Lord Glenfells.

"You cannot gainsay the law of life. You cannot stay the fleeting breath which is even now about to leave my frame; but, oh! my Lord, I am happy, to receive forgiveness—to hear you speak so gently to the erring one, who has done so much to deserve your hatred and contempt. And who knows?" she continued, clasping both hands together, and uplifting her eyes, with an expression of fervent devotion, "who knows but that our three spirits—yours, mine, and his—may yet meet in a future state of being, where, purified and divested of earth, together we may rejoice in a blessed spirituality?" Oh, Alexander, let us hope that it will be so."

He looked at her as if he gazed on one inspired, so illumined with fervor and feeling was her pale face—so animated the fire of her eyes; but even as he looked, a dark cloud came over this brightness. Her face suddenly flushed deep crimson; the blood flowed from her small mouth; it dabbled, with its red stain, the dress she wore. A vein had burst, and it was hastening the event which a few brief hours must have ultimately accomplished. She fell back upon her pillows, and putting her hands to her mouth, they were also suffused with blood. In agony, Lord Glenfells surveyed her; then, in confusion and anguish, he strove to wipe away the fatal hemorrhage, but in vain; it flowed as quickly as before. Some moments she lay quiet, as if unconscious, while *he*, almost paralyzed with fear, stood over the bed. Then, opening her eyes, she motioned him to raise her; he did so; he laid her beautiful head on his breast, and took one hand in his. She seemed endeavoring to say something, but the words died inarticulate on her pale lips. Another, and a darker shade now passed over her pale features; the blood flowed with renewed violence from her mouth; her eyes were now suffused with a red

light; their lovely expression altered; she no longer saw him. Alarmed at this terrible sight, he anxiously called her by name; but she answered not. She opened her eyes on him; but they were cold and fixed. The hue had faded, within ten minutes, to a pale gray color. Speechless with amazement, Lord Glenfells again laid her on the bed, and knelt by its side. Too frightened to think of soliciting assistance, he remained, as it were, in a dream, almost doubting his own identity, or the reality of the scene.

Presently, the first agony of the paroxysm passed away. A calmer light came over her sweet face. She extended her arms, and drawing his face close to hers, she imprinted a kiss upon his forehead. It was the first in many years she had given him,—it was the last; for in that kiss her life had passed away, and the sweet smile that played around her lips remained imprinted there in death.

Alarmed, stupefied, Lord Glenfells uttered an involuntary shriek, and hastened toward the door for assistance. As he did so, two men came rushing in. They were the physician and Lord Adonfion.

“Who is this? What does this man want in my wife’s room?” sternly demanded the second husband, as he observed the agony impressed on the other’s face. The stranger endeavored to stop him, and escape from the room unobserved; but seizing him by the arm, he again demanded, “Who are you? What are you doing here?”

“My Lord,” said Lord Glenfells, calmly shaking off his hold, and pointing to the lifeless form before them, “I have just seen the death of *my* wife and *yours*. Five years ago, that beautiful woman, now lying so stiff and cold, was *my* wife; now I find her *yours*. How shall we reconcile our claims?”

“How, what is it? What do you say? I cannot

comprehend, pray explain?" said the physician, interposing.

"Am I dreaming?" ejaculated Lord Adonfion, "she was your wife? Why you must be mad! truly two days ago we were wrecked off this coast coming from France to this country. I have been the husband of this lady five years, and to my knowledge she never was the wife of any other man. And here in my own room I find a stranger bending over my wife, who calls himself her husband! Who are you, I ask again? Tell me, what do you want?"

At this imperious demand the flashing dark eyes of Lord Glenfells darted fire; but as he appeared about to retort in anger, his gaze fell upon the lifeless form upon the bed and his anger fled. He calmly replied, "I can easily satisfy you who I am in more than one way; suffice it to say I am Lord Glenfells, the lawful husband of that unhappy woman. She deserted me; years have fled; I was unable to obtain the faintest trace of her; when chance this evening showed her to me once more, and I was in time to hear her last words, to listen to her confession, to see her die."

"Die," shrieked Lord Adonfion. "Oh God, it is impossible; I left her sleeping an hour ago; she is not dead." He rushed to the bedside, and lifted one of the beautiful hands, lying like a snow-flake on the coverlid. It fell back again heavily by her side; but even this did not satisfy the distracted lover, for catching up the corpse, notwithstanding all the physician and Lord Glenfells could do to prevent him, he carried it to the window as if he thought the cool air would restore life again. He kissed the still lips, he called "Paradise" again and again; but never again, unhappy man will that little mouth distill words of sweetness and love! It is stilled forever, forever! Oh, fatal word, and yet how often we feel its truth.

They succeeded in inducing him to give them the corpse and they laid it back again on the bed. Then Lord Adonfion fell into a chair and sobbed; but Lord Glenfells' face was composed again into its habitual taciturnity and sadness, and after taking a long, impassioned, lingering look at the lady, he turned to Lord Adonfion.

"Lord Adonfion," said he "we are strangers to each other, we have never met before, and probably shall never meet again. Our meeting thus, both being the husband of the same woman, is truly extraordinary; so singular an event, probably, never has happened before, nor will such a thing occur soon again. I am her lawful husband; you also suppose yourself so; she deserted me; she deceived you; yet her fine talents and her splendid beauty would have induced many other men to have as blindly loved her as we have done. Let us be friends, since the cause of our love and grief is dead. Let us together render the last duties to the departed as if we were brothers."

Lord Adonfion, without lifting his head from his right arm on which it was pillowed on the back of the chair, extended his left hand and cordially grasped that of the stranger, he seemed unable to speak from the violence of his feelings, and, when some moments after he looked up, Lord Glenfells was gone, and he and the physician were left alone with the dead beauty.

CHAPTER IV.

SHE was buried on that rocky shore, and her two husbands were the mourners at the funeral. To have seen the intense gloom of Lord Glenfells' face, and the mournful sadness of Lord Adonfion, one could scarcely have told which suffered the most. Her grave was on a gentle promontory; the waves washed the shore, and their soft murmur in a calm was the lullaby of quiet grief, and in storms their sullen roar was the loud requiem of sorrow over her tomb.

When the grave was filled, the sod pressed down over the last repose of the beautiful lady, the sexton, the clergyman, and the numerous spectators departed, the two husbands, with impressive earnestness, pressed each other's hands, and bade each other adieu. Lord Glenfells returning to the Inn, shut himself up in his room; Lord Adonfion, in desperate haste, as if to forget himself and the world, departed from Dover, leaving the bewildered inhabitants to speculate on this mysterious affair. But, notwithstanding their vulgar curiosity used every means to discover the secret, it was so carefully guarded by the two persons interested in its keeping that they talked and surmised in vain.

For some days after the funeral, Lord Glenfells refused to admit to his apartments either the hostess or the domestics of the establishment, his own valet Henri, attending alone; but it was rumored by this servant, that his master seemed absorbed in grief; that he continually walked the

floor and talked to himself. Every night, too, whether it was storm or brightness, he walked forth to her grave and passed hours there. Thus he lived as it were with the dead, for a month; when the two officers who came before to the Inn, again made their appearance and demanded to see him.

They were admitted. They found him again seated before a table reading, as on the night of their first visit. He welcomed them with the same urbanity, but a deeper gloom and unhappiness was imprinted on his fine features.

"Gentlemen, I am most happy to see you again," was his polite salutation, as they entered his room.

The elder officer started, as he noticed the sad change wrought in the nobleman's face since last he saw him; but, without appearing to observe it, he said:

"We have been sent here in advance, sir, to announce that his Lordship intends coming here within an hour. He has received Government orders to leave in the 'Vengeance,' for the Mediterranean."

"Going to the Mediterranean!" exclaimed Lord Glenfells, speaking almost with animation. "Why, this is strange, most singular—you said nothing of it to me when last I saw you."

"No, we did not; neither did his Lordship know that he should go there so soon. He only received his orders two days ago, and the 'Vengeance' has been sent round here to an offing. You can see her in the harbor from this window. His Lordship was detained a little while at the Admiralty, but will be here soon."

Lord Glenfells rose, and going to the window looked out. Far away on the bosom of the blue, tranquil ocean, the "Vengeance" reposed like a swan on a tranquil lake. Her tall, slender masts, covered with white sails, spread to the

freshening breeze, and seemed to invite the zephyr's play. The sparkling waves glittered in the sunshine, and gently rolled over the spot where the lost ship lay.

With his back turned toward his visitors, Lord Glenfells murmured as he gazed:

"Roll on, O glorious ocean, silent and deep as my own sad heart. Roll on, ye silent waters, now calmly smiling; but your tempest and whirlwind suits me best. In storms and darkness my soul now finds affinity, since she is gone forever, who made the sunshine of my life."

The tears started to his dark eyes; but, with a violent effort of his will, he repressed them, and, when he turned, his face was as calm as before.

The hour passed quickly away in general conversation, and they were still talking, when Lord Hastings was announced. Merry, fat, and good-natured looking were the characteristics of his face, yet there was blended with its light-heartedness much decision and force of character. He was short, and rather fat in form, but withal, graceful and high-bred in manner. Advancing rapidly toward Lord Glenfells, he greeted him with great cordiality, then turning to Captain Lewis, he said with urbanity, yet still in a commanding manner, at the same time giving him a note:

"May I request, Captain Lewis, that you will give this to my brother, whom you will find at the shore?"

The younger gentlemen bowed low to their commander and his friend, and both went away. Then Lord Hastings turned with eagerness to his friend, and said:

"My dear, dear Glenfells, I have received orders agreeable to my wish, sending me immediately to the Mediterranean and the Levant. I know all, my dear fellow," he added, with an expression of deep interest in his merry face, "I most sincerely sympathize with and pity you. But all

is over now; don't waste your life any longer in these bitter feelings; they will destroy you. Come with me to the South. The beautiful waves of the Ægean will bear us to climes we have never seen. New scenes will divert your mind and chase away these morbid moods. Come with me in my fairy ship. She floats like a swan on the waters. Together you and I will wander amid the ruins of Thebes, Memphis, and Balbeck. Together we will philosophize at Athens and Corinth. Let me persuade you to accompany me; a few months journey will completely revive your health and spirits. I shall see you again gay and witty as of old." A melancholy smile flitted across Lord Glenfells' face. For a moment he made no reply.

Again his friend urged him:

"I have come either to bid you farewell or to take you with me, Alexander. I sail in two hours. Which shall it be? Will you persist in remaining here and grieving yourself to a skeleton, or will you come to joy and pleasure, far away from the associations of your misfortunes? Decide my friend, or let me decide for you?"

"Well!" answered the other listless. "Do you decide for me."

"Well! I am selfish; I want your agreeable company. I want to wean you from regrets. I say, come."

"Very well," answered Lord Glenfells, "I shall be ready in an hour."

"Call your valet, and let him get things ready for you; and, in the meantime, do you come and walk with me on the beach. The scenery is delightful, and the air is very bracing this fine morning."

Together they descended to the beach. On the way they passed the grave of Paradise. "She sleeps there," observed Lord Glenfells, pointing to it. Lord Hastings

looked at it with an expression of interest; then, glancing at his friend, he said, seeing the look of fixed sorrow imprinted there:

"Time will console you. Wait and hope."

"I will try," was the almost inarticulate response.

Two hours afterwards found them on the deck of the man-of-war. The sailors loosed the ropes, hoisted this sail, and hauled out that, with incredible speed.

The stately ship gradually swung round to the breeze which filled her sails. As they rounded the promontory on which Paradise was buried, Lord Glenfells wafted a blessing to the shore.

"Farewell," he muttered, "to the first, last, greatest, only passion of my life. Farewell; never again shall I be called on to endure the torments of jealousy, or experience the happiness of love. All those feelings with me are past. They are buried with you my Paradise. Henceforth, welcome wisdom, thought, labor, anything that can prevent me from thinking, from looking back. Farewell—Farewell."

The ship went bounding on. Let us suppose that it bore the unhappy man onward to happiness,—to what he so ardently desired—repose."

THE END.

IRENE;
OR THE
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF
AN ARTIST'S DAUGHTER.

BY
MISS GERTRUDE FAIRFIELD.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1852, by
GERTRUDE FAIRFIELD,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern
District of New York.

AUTHORESS' NOTICE.

IN consequence of an unavoidable delay in the completion of a Novelette, by Miss Geneveive Genevera Fairfield, which was originally designed to conclude this work, Miss Gertrude Fairfield, her sister, will supply its place with "IRENE."

It appears requisite to state this for the satisfaction of those who might be perplexed with the new arrangement.

GERTRUDE FAIRFIELD.

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TO
PROFESSOR HENRY W. LONGFELLOW,
AS A SLIGHT TOKEN OF ADMIRATION,
FOR HIS GENIUS
AND IN TESTIMONY OF HIGH APPRECIATION OF
HIS FRIENDSHIP FOR HER FATHER,
THIS NOVELETTE IS DEDICATED BY THE
AUTHORESS.

I R E N E:

OR, TH

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN ARTIST'S DAUGHTER.



INTRODUCTION.

WE were at Naples at last. The goal of all my wishes since we had entered Italy, and the dream of my girlish years lay smiling and beautiful before me; more beautiful, more poetical, than I had ever imagined it. I had stood upon the cloud-capped Alps, and seen the torrents, whose sources are often lost in the clouds, rush over the rocks into the ravines below; I had gazed upon its pathless forests, its eternal snows and glaciers, and in those scenes terrifically sublime, felt mingled emotions of awe, wild enthusiasm, and deep melancholy. In these majestic solitudes nature seems omnipotent, and human beings mere accessories. The lonely grandeur excites only the imagination—all passions sink into insignificance. In Italy the heart and the senses are as irresistibly awakened as the imagination. This is especially true of Naples. The azure sky reflects itself in the bay, whose waters, of a soft blue, lave the base of the villas, gardens, and convents, that border the long and gentle curve of the shore, from which the buildings rise amphitheatrically, till crowned by the castle of St.

Elms. To the right of the city, about four miles distant, rises Vesuvius, the villages of Portici and Resina, reposing at its feet, while to the left, close to the extremity of the city, projects the gentle promontory Posilippo, covered with beautiful villas, towers, gardens and groves. In the background tower the bold and many colored peaks of the Apennines.

The balmy softness of the atmosphere, the enchanting harmony of everything around, insensibly tranquilizes ; it seems to me that only images of beauty, and love, visited this soft clime.

I, a wanderer from America, traveled with my daughter, a child of ten, an English lady and dear friend, and her husband. Together we had visited Switzerland, Rome, Florence, and Pisa, and my friend, though not as great an enthusiast as myself, still had gazed with delight on all that was great and beautiful.

It was Carnival time, but its gaieties were almost over ; Lent approached. Mrs. L—— and myself were both Catholics, with the difference that she possessed some of the intolerance common to this religion in England, and on the Continent, while I in my faith had no prejudice ; religion like politics in my happy land, is free and enlightened. It is the custom with many devout Catholics in Italy to retire to the sacred privacy of a convent during this season. Mrs. L—— wished to do so, and urged me to accompany her. After a little hesitation about leaving my child, whom I thought too young to go with me to such profound seclusion, I concluded to confide her to the care of Mr. L—— and her governess, and the first week of Lent we entered the convent of the Holy Cross, standing on one of the gentle hills a little way out of Naples, commanding a splendid view of the city and the bay. There were about a hundred

sisters in the convent, simple-minded, devout women, in no way differing from the generality. The only one among them possessing any distinguishing traits, was the abbess, Mother Cecilla. Her mild and serene face still retained traces of beauty, and her kindly manner immediately attracted me.

We had been in the convent some days. One evening Mrs. L——, Mother Cecilla, and myself were wandering through the aisles, looking at the cells of the nuns, and the little altars to the Virgin at the end of them. We entered, at last, a wing of the building containing only one cell, the door of which was closed. "Whose cell is this, mother?" I asked.

"It is no one's now, my child; it was once occupied by one I dearly loved."

"And she is dead, dear mother?" suggested Mrs. L——.

"I do not know, I hope not. She was not a nun, but a stranger, an English lady, who sought retirement here, suffering with deep grief. Would you like to go in my children?"

"Yes, much," we said, our interest excited by her words.

She took a key from a bunch by her side, unlocked the door, and we entered. It was a cell the same size as the others, and furnished with the same severe plainness. There was no carpet on the floor; under a window, looking out on the beautiful grounds, stood a table, scattered over with writing materials; beside it was an arm chair. A pallet occupied one side of the wall, opposite hung a few shelves piled with books. But for the dust thickly settled on everything, the cell looked as if its occupant had just quitted it. I gazed around with that undefinable melancholy one feels in beholding a deserted abode.

"Mother," I said turning to her, "this place seems to me very lonely."

"And to me very sad; everything is as it was when she

was here—I permit nothing to be altered.” The eyes of the good mother moistened.

“Do you know the history of this unfortunate lady?” asked Mrs. L——.

“Would you be pleased, if I should relate it to you?”

“I should be delighted,” I said eagerly, all my love of romance excited by this mysterious, melancholy being.

“There is the bell for evening prayers, my children, I have no time now. To-morrow I will relate to you all that I know concerning her.”

We went out, the door was closed and locked, and we went to prayers.

The next day, an hour before dusk, the abbess entered our cell. She held in her hands a piece of tapestry work and a portfolio. She seated herself and said,

“I come to fulfill my promise, that is, if you have not lost your interest in one unknown.”

I assured her we had not, and after a short, thoughtful pause, she began:

“One morning, four years ago, I was summoned to the reception room. I opened the wicket and saw a gentleman of noble, venerable appearance, standing beside a chair, in which a lady was seated. She was dressed in mourning, and a veil concealed her face. The gentleman advanced to me and said,

“Are you the mother Superior, madam?”

“I am sir,” I replied.

“And you receive here, I believe, persons who desire to retire from society for a time?”

“Any one of our faith can go into retreat here, sir.”

“This lady has just recovered from a dangerous illness, occasioned by grief for the loss of friends. She desires to leave society for a time, and I would be glad if she could

enter here, as you have the reputation of being benevolent. She is not a Catholic in profession, but in faith I believe she is. Would this be an objection to receiving her?"

"According to general custom, sir, it would be, but as she is a Catholic in faith, I waive the rest. Are you a relation of the lady, sir?"

"No madam, simply an old friend of herself and her husband. I confide her to your care with confidence; any sum you will name, as compensation, shall be paid." After a moment's reflection, I told him the amount I considered sufficient. I was about to ask if he would visit his friend, when he said,

"Florence is the residence of this lady, and also mine. I am obliged to return immediately. She has no relatives or friends here; she leaves Florence for change of scene and entire seclusion. The Countess Giolamo is her name—this is mine," and he handed me a card on which was written, "Count Louis Foresti."

He turned away and approached the lady, who, during our conversation, had sat as silent and immovable as a statue, and said a few words to her in a low voice. She rose, laid her hand upon his arm, and averted her head from me, but I saw her raise her handkerchief to her eyes with a trembling hand, while he continued to speak to her. After a few moments, he bent down and pressed his lips gently to her forehead; she sank into her chair, and coming quickly to me, he said, "If anything should occur that you wish to inform me of, write to me at Florence. Adieu madam," he bowed to me, and hastily quitted the apartment.

I opened the door and went to her, and said as kindly as possible,

"Will you be kind enough madam to follow me into the convent?"

She got up without a word, and walked by my side to one of the cells, appropriated to ladies in retreat, somewhat better furnished than our own, as you know. I ushered her in and then left her for a moment, to attend to the call of one of the sisters. When I returned she was seated by the window, drying the last tears from her cheeks. She had taken off her hat and shawl, which had so completely shrouded her, that I had formed no idea of her age or appearance. I was greatly surprised to see a young woman, not more than twenty-one, and spite of the marks of grief and illness, a most beautiful creature. She was above the medium height, and though very thin, her form was exquisitely symmetrical. The marble whiteness of her complexion was enhanced by the contrast of her splendid dark brown hair, arranged in bands falling on her cheeks. Her features were regular and delicate, and her large almond-shaped eyes of a deep, soft blue.

"My dear daughter," I said approaching her, "I hope you will be happy with us; you will find companions among the sisters, if you desire it, of your own age.

"Thank you, you are very kind, but I should be but a poor companion for any one."

I perceived by this reply, and by her abstracted look, that she wished for solitude, and so I left her. Sister Martha carried her meals to the cell that day, as she requested it, and the next morning I saw her again. She was dressed, but lying on her pallet with her eyes closed; she heard my step and rose quickly, and said in her musical, sad voice,

"Good morning mother."

"Good morning my child, how are you?"

"Well I thank you; pray be seated." I sat down and she continued,

"I am going to ask a favor of you, I want to change my cell. I hear the sisters talking and laughing around, and it disturbs me; don't think me morose, I have been so ill, and the slightest thing troubles me. I should like a cell removed from the others, where I might be quiet."

I was not much surprised at her request, and remembering the cell in the wing, I mentioned it to her, and asked if it would please her to have it. She accepted immediately, and that day removed there. She preferred, she said, that her cell should be furnished just like the nuns, and so it remained. She asked me to allow her to take her meals in her cell, and her youth, loveliness and misfortunes interested me so much, that I consented to whatever she wished. She expressed no wish to see either myself, or the sisters, and we had too much delicacy to force ourselves upon her. Weeks—months passed; I saw her only at mass on Sunday, and then exchanged a few words. Sister Martha said, she often found her weeping bitterly. She had been with us five months; I had never entered her cell. One day Sister Martha told me the lady was ill, and wished to see me. I went immediately to her. She was in bed, and looked languid and feverish; I sat down by her, and she gave me her hand and said,

"I am glad to see you mother, perhaps I am going to have another long, dreadful illness, and this time it may take me out of the world; promise me that you will, if I am very ill, write to Count Foresti to come here. I tell you now, because I may become delirious."

"Oh, my dear child, you must not talk so; I am the physician of the convent and will administer something that will cure you immediately," I said cheeringly.

"I wish you to promise me, good mother."

"Certainly my child, if it is necessary it shall be done."

I remained with her as much as my duties would permit, and the remedies I gave her stayed the course of the fever, and in a few days she was almost well again. During this time a very tender intimacy grew up between us, I hardly know how. She was wearing away her life with grief, and I strove with all my power to cheer and console her, and my sympathy won her gratitude and affection. As soon as she got well, we took long walks together in the grounds. I often gently urged her to confide to me the history of her life. At first she refused. "Ah, dear mother," she would say, "it would only pain you, and be of no use to me."

"Not so, my dear child, dispassionate, to retrace the past, severely to judge yourself, would calm you; you would find, doubtless, that you have done as nearly right as frail mortals ever do."

"I have much to regret perhaps, but your interest is so kind, I will endeavor to summon courage to write my life for you."

Very frequently after that I found her writing, sometimes bathing the pages with her tears.

Another six months passed. One day I was sitting with her, when the portress came to tell me a gentleman wished to see me. I hastened to the reception room. I saw a magnificent looking man standing in the little parlor; his face was agitated; he came to the wicket and said,

"Is there a lady here, bearing the name of the Countess Giolamo?"

"There is sir," I answered.

"Will you be kind enough madam to give her this letter? I will wait here for an answer."

I took the letter to her myself, wondering what it could be. She was pacing her cell; I held the letter up to her.

"For me? From my friend, the Count?" she said, eagerly taking it.

The moment she saw the superscription, she turned pale and fell into a chair, dropping the letter on the floor.

"What is the matter?" I said, picking it up, and giving it to her.

She opened it tremblingly. Wishing to wait for her reply, I walked to the window and waited. Suddenly the Countess uttered an incoherent exclamation; I turned quickly; she rose from her seat, took a few steps toward the door and fell insensible. I caught a pitcher of water off a table, raised her head upon my knees, and bathed her face and hands until she recovered. "Ah what is it? Where am I? It was a dream, then," she exclaimed, rising and gazing wildly around. Then seeing the letter lying on the floor, she seized and pressed it to her lips passionately.

"Ah, if it is true—if it is only true, how happy—how blessed I shall be; but he is waiting, take me to him, quickly, I implore you."

I guided her to the reception room. Joy lent her wings, she flew along before me, pulled the wicket door open and rushed in. I withdrew.

It was nearly three hours before the bell told me the stranger wished to depart. The portress went and unlocked the doors, and returned with a request from the Countess, that I would come to her cell. I went, curious and anxious to know what had occurred. She was pacing to and fro, her eye-lashes and her flushed cheeks were wet with tears, but her face beamed. She threw herself into my arms. "Oh! I am happy—so happy; my poor head throbs so I can hardly stand; but alas! there is something sad in everything. I must go and leave you to-morrow morning."

"How I shall regret you, my child," I said.

She laid her hand upon a manuscript on the table and said,

"This is the history of my life you have asked me for. I shall add a few words to explain what you have just seen. You will read it, and think of me, when I am far away."

I bade her "good night," and left her to her joyous thoughts.

Early the next morning the gentleman came. I went to bid her adieu with a heavy heart. She was ready and I walked by her side to the gate. She threw her arms around me, I pressed her to my heart and murmured, "God bless you." She passed through the gate, it closed after her—she was gone. I found the manuscript on the table in her cell; I read it with deep interest, passing over some heretical passages, which you, if Catholics, will do well to do also, in reading it.

The mother took the manuscript from the portfolio and gave it to me. My curiosity excited by her narrative, I immediately read the Autobiography, and took the trouble to copy it so that I might retain it. Having explained how it came into my possession, I shall no longer detain my readers from it.

CHAPTER I.

IRENE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

My earliest recollections are very desultory and confused. A woman with a graceful form, soft eyes, and a sweet soothing voice, is associated with my infantile years. Something tells me that those kindly eyes, and gentle tones, can belong only to my mother. This sweet but intangible impression is all I retain of her.

Next, there is a little tottering creature, that I lead about and play with, and a tall man with dark eyes and raven hair, who holds me in his arms and carries me round a large room, showing me things I cannot comprehend at all, but which I know now were pictures. There is a blank in my memory; time has elapsed. I have become quite a large girl, and my little sister Estelle has grown almost as large as myself. We are living in lodgings, a large room where we sit all day, and study our lessons to recite to our father; and two little bed-rooms, one occupied by Estelle, myself and a servant, who takes care of us; the other by our father. From this time everything is clear in my memory.

The large apartment, at once dining and sitting room, was also my father's studio. A curtain fastened across the lower part of the window, allowed the light to fall on the picture resting on the easel. Portfolios of engravings, busts, casts, and statues, used to excite my childish wonder and delight. I never tired of admiring the bright colors ranged on the palette, and the large manikin who

had such pretty dresses. I have sat for hours, my book upon my knee, gazing at the picture as it grew beneath my father's hand. Some of the beautiful creations of his fancy are indelibly imprinted on my memory. There was one, representing in miniature, the fable of Diana and Endymion. Azure hills and streams in the distance, towering rocks and soft green sward in the foreground, were bathed with the tranquil light of the moon. Near the entrance to a cave, almost concealed by luxuriant foliage, on a gentle eminence of moss-grown rocks, half reclined Endymion, his long fair locks curled from his broad white brow. It was the Endymion of the poet. The dark tender eyes dwelt on the daring goddess of the hunt, who reclined beside him, her head upon her arm and that upon his shoulder. A hunting dress of green descended below the knee, sandals on her feet, and round her proud brow gleamed the golden crescent. The greatest charm of the picture, the deep mysterious silence that seemed to breathe from it, broken, one would imagine, only by the sighs of love. I was too young to understand or appreciate; but the ideal loveliness of the forms, the beautiful softness of the coloring, touched here and there by sharp rays of light, excited the love of the beautiful, inherent in my nature. The other was a full sized head and shoulders of the Magdalene, the hands clasping an ivory cross upon the bosom, a mantle of black serge fell upon it, the neck revealing the full throat and heaving bosom. Her magnificent dark eyes were uplifted to heaven, shining through tears; they stood, too, upon her pale olive cheeks, surrounded by long, dark, unconfined tresses, and on her mournful robe. Since then, I have gazed on the Magdalenes of the great masters, but none to my mind were more beautiful than that sorrowing face.

In writing of these, how vividly rises the recollection of

my father. Ah! how often I have seen him standing before his easel, his fair black hair brushed from his beautiful brow, eloquent with thought. His clear olive complexion, noble features and beaming smile, they are all before me as I write. I was then, I suppose, about eight years old, too young to be a confidant of my father's disappointments and sorrows; but, child as I was, my heart saddened when I saw his face clouded.

CHAPTER II.

WE had been living in this place some months, I do not know exactly how long. Our life had been exceedingly monotonous and solitary; for Estelle and I to study our lessons, repeat them to our father, eat lunch at twelve, and then amuse ourselves with plays or books until towards evening, when our father, resting from his labors, took us to walk in the crowded, busy streets; this was the routine of every day, and though one would not think this life suited to light-hearted children, yet we were happy till a sad change came.

Day by day I noticed things disappearing from the studio. In the course of a few weeks all the statues, busts and some of the pictures had gone. At last the manikin went away. I could not understand what it meant, and asking my father, he told me with a sigh that they were sold. Sometime passed; one morning my father instead of sitting down at his easel, as usual, dressed himself to go out, and then called Mary, our faithful and kind servant to him.

"Mary," he said, "what do I owe you?" She told him. He took some money from his pocket-book and paid her, and said, "I shall not want you any longer, Mary." I and Estelle were leaning on the arm chair in which my father sat. I saw Mary's face become red.

"Have I done anything to offend you sir?" she said.

"No, Mary, I have no fault to find with you. I discharge you because I cannot afford to keep you."

"But the children, sir, what will they do?"

"They must learn to do for themselves."

Mary turned quietly away and went into our little bedroom. I followed her. She began tying up her clothes in a little bundle, while I stood gazing at her very sadly, wondering what Estelle and I would possibly do without her. Presently she finished and came to me.

"Good-by, Miss Irene, I am sorry enough to leave you," she said.

"Good-by Mary," I replied, walking after her into the hall. At the head of the stairs she paused a moment and said,

"If you ever want me, Miss Irene, you will find me in — street, between — and —."

The names have long since escaped my memory. I told her I would come and see her, and then went back into the room.

"Come here, Irene," said my father. I went to him. Estelle sat on one knee, he took me on the other.

"Irene, my dear child, you will have to take care of yourself and Estelle hereafter. Dress yourself and her, and take care of your clothes. I know you are very young to do this, but poor children, you have no mother and I have not money to pay a servant, or even to stay in these lodgings. I must get a cheaper place. You are a dear, thoughtful child, Irene, and you will try to do for your father what he tells you, won't you?"

I was not very self-confident, but his tone, his sad face, moved me so, that I laid my cheek to his with tears in my eyes and said,

"Dear, dear pa, indeed I will."

"I must go now and look for a place to take you to, for this does not belong to me after to-day. While I am gone,

Irene, take your first lesson in doing for yourself, by packing your and Estelle's clothes, books, etc., in your trunk."

He put us down, kissed us and went out. I stood looking round, wondering where I should begin. There was nothing here belonging to us, except our school books; I gathered them up and went into my little room, followed by Estelle. I opened my trunk and laid them in. Then I looked round, found our night clothes and put them in next. Dresses, books, shoes, followed pell mell. When I had closed and locked the trunk, and put the key in my pocket, I thought that though it might have been more methodically done, still such things were not so frightfully difficult as I had imagined.

This done, I brushed Estelle's hair and my own and returned to the studio, wandered round, looking at the pictures and out of the windows for two hours, that went very slowly, till my father returned. I ran to him and drew him by the hand to see how I had obeyed him.

"Ah! what a good child, everything packed. Now I must be as industrious with my things. I have got a place, not as comfortable as this, but—," he stopped and sighed heavily, hastily returned to the studio and commenced his preparations. In an hour all was ready; our luggage was put on a cart and we walked after it, holding our father's hands. Up and down many long streets, and we came at last to a narrow, dirty street, and stopped before a mean old house.

"This is the house," said my father.

We ascended the steep wooden steps. An old woman admitted us. We went up a long flight of stairs and entered a scantily furnished room. A double bed stood in one corner. A door opened into a room as small as a closet, containing a cot. This was to be our future home.

The easel was set up. The school commenced over again—everything in the old course, only our father was frequently absent, and we had to get accustomed to solitude. Our domestic arrangements were very simple. My father furnished the provision, which the servant of the house cooked; and we took our meals in our room. My father occupied the little bed-room; Estelle and I slept in the large bed. The servant attended to our room.

CHAPTER III.

The long, dreary winter passed monotonously. Very frequently we had not sufficient food or fuel to render us comfortable. As spring drew on things grew worse; sometimes we had nothing but bread to eat, and our poor father was worn and pale with toil and anxiety. Summer went in the same way; our only recreation was a walk in the hot, dusty streets.

This life, strange and solitary for so young a child, made me thoughtful beyond my years. By degrees my father came to look upon me as a companion, and confided to me many of his difficulties and sorrows. Winter approached again. It was impossible for my father to pay for the rooms we occupied, and so we removed again. Two small rooms, uncarpeted and uncurtained; a few wooden chairs, a pine table, and a little stove; this was all the furniture our new abode contained. We slept on straw beds, placed on cots, and with such scant covering, that very often, Estelle and I lay shivering for hours before we could sleep.

Through his own exertions and the influence of the last friend, evil fortunes had left him; my father was engaged to paint the portraits of a family living in H—, a few miles from London. He went to them every morning, and thus we were left alone all day; but at sunset he returned to us. At the sound of his dear, familiar footsteps on the stairs, we rushed to meet him, joyfully kissed his hands, his

noble sad face, led him in, and when he was seated, climbed upon his knee, to hear him relate the incidents of the day.

Often, in the long weary hours of his absence, after our lessons were finished, we were at a loss to amuse ourselves. One day, looking over a box of books, the only relics of happier days, I found among Greek and Latin books, works upon the fine arts, and a volume of Byron. I seized on it with delight and soon lost myself in its pages. I could not then understand these great and sombre thoughts, but without knowing why, I always felt melancholy after reading it. In after years I have felt the same, in reading those disheartening, desolating views of life—perhaps, alas! too true—and yet—no—no—faith, even if it deceives, is a far wiser philosophy. The belief in a supreme and benign Being, is necessary to reconcile us to the inevitable and irremediable evils of life. Ah! there are moments, when the greatest and proudest repose their weary, doubting spirits, on the thought of the great Infinite. But I wander—let me return.

My father had completed all but one of the portraits he was engaged in painting. One cold morning it was storming violently, my father went away, saying, with a long sigh,

“My poor little ones, always alone; be good, dear children, and I will return early.”

The day wore heavily away. At two o'clock the servant brought our little dinner. When we had finished, the things were taken away, and we stood with our arm round each other, looking through the blurred window panes into the wet, comfortless streets. It rained so that it grew dark very early; I lighted our lamp and we listened every instant for our father's step.

Minutes lengthened into hours, still he came not. We sat clinging to each other, terrified at the loneliness and

deep silence, broken only by the pattering of the rain, afraid to speak or move.

A night of storms is always melancholy, especially to lonely children, assailed by a thousand vague terrors. We heard a bell strike nine, ten, eleven, and then, weeping with grief, such as only helpless children know, we undressed, fastened our door and went to bed. Estelle slept almost immediately, but I tossed for an hour before I forgot myself. It was late in the morning when we awoke; the sun was shining brightly into the room. I looked around, expecting to see my father. How wretched and dreary the room looked, and I remembered how many hours had passed since I had seen him. We got up and dressed ourselves sadly. "Where is poor papa, Irene?" asked Estelle. I turned away my head so that she might not see the tears in my eyes.

"He will be back to-day, I am sure, dear."

We waited for our breakfast, but it came not; hearing the servant in the hall, we called her and told her to bring it to us. In a little time it came; we ate a few morsels, but my aching heart, the tears rushing incessantly to my eyes, choked me.

We passed the day in doing nothing; I looked out of the window, counted every moment, listened to every sound, while Estelle moaned and cried herself sick. It was another dreary day. A drizzling rain fell—a thick fog almost hid the opposite side of the street.

About four o'clock some one opened the door and entered. I raised my eyes quickly and saw the tall, gaunt form of our landlady.

"Where is your father?" she said in her sharp vinegar voice.

"I don't know ma'am," I answered.

"You don't know? he has been away all night, hasn't he?"

"Yes ma'am."

"Who knows if he'll ever come back again; gone off and left you on me; if he has, I shall have to send you to the alms house. I am poor—I can't do anything for you."

Estelle burst into loud cries and sobs, and clung around my neck. Terrified at her words and at her hard vulgar face, I faltered,

"Oh! what makes you think our father has gone away from us? our dear father, what will become of us?"

"I don't know; all I can say is, if your father don't come back soon, I will have to hand you over to the commissioner of the poor."

With these words she left us. What grief and desolation filled our hearts. I did not for an instant believe her absurd assertion, that our father had deserted us; but it made me think, with terror, of his long absence, and feel confident something dreadful had happened to him. Oh! with what unutterable dread I thought of our being left to the mercy of the cruel world, and how utterly helpless we were. Estelle bathed in tears, clung to me, but I did not weep, though I felt as if my heart would break. It was already dark and raining violently. Suddenly a desperate idea entered my head; I ran to the little closet, where all the clothes we possessed hung, took down our worn hats and cloaks and said to Estelle, quite breathless,

"Put them on quick, dear."

She obeyed, saying wonderingly,

"What are you going to do, Irene?"

I threw my own on, seized her hand and whispered,

"Come, and don't make a noise for your life."

We stole down stairs and into the street; half frantic

with fright, I rushed down the street, dragging Estelle after me. We ran up and down two or three streets and then recovering my reason a little, I paused; I had acted from a blind impulse, thinking the dark, wet, lonely streets, were preferable to that woman and the commissioners of the poor; but now the darkness, the rain, that already drenched us, filled me with new alarms.

"Oh Estelle," I cried, "what will become of us—we shall have to go back—oh where is our father?"

She replied only with sobs, and tremblingly I endeavored to retrace my steps in the thick darkness; but in the confusion of my mind, I mistook the street, again and again; we turned and at last entirely lost myself in a labyrinth of narrow lanes; then giving up all hope I began to weep bitterly. Wet to our very skins, shivering with cold and terror, we hurried along without knowing whither we were going. At every step upon the pavement I started, expecting to feel a heavy hand upon my shoulder, and hear a voice arresting us as vagrants. The night was pitch dark; only by an occasional street lamp or light from a tavern, were we enabled to see a step before us.

"Oh Irene, I shall die—indeed, indeed I shall—I can't go any further—I am too wet and tired. We shall never see our poor father any more; we shall never find our way back again."

The poor child leaned so heavily on me as she spoke, that I was obliged to stop.

Almost dying myself I supported her, and at this moment, my eyes fell on a light shining from the window of a little house opposite. I had heard such dreadful tales of London, that I had been afraid to inquire the way of any one; but this little house looked cheerful and respectable.

"See Estelle, dear, we will go over there and inquire the way," I said.

We crossed to the door and I knocked. Some one rose quickly within and came to open it. It was a young woman.

"What do you want, children?" she asked.

"Oh ma'am!" I said, through my tears, "we have lost our way; we have been for two hours in the wet dark streets. Oh! can't you let some one show us the way home, if you please?"

"Why, bless my heart and soul!" cried the woman, throwing the door wide open, and pulling us in, "I know that voice, I'm sure. Why gracious me, it is—it's Miss Irene and Estelle. Oh! the darling children, so wet and cold. Come here to the stove, you'll surely die—and tell me what on earth you are out in the street at night for?"

It was our old kind Mary. In my joy to see a familiar face, I kissed her again and again. She drew us to the warm stove, took off our shoes and stockings, bonnets and cloaks, and hung them to dry. Then she produced from a little closet a bottle of ale, which she emptied into two glasses and almost forced us to drink, saying, it would keep us from taking cold. Then she sat down by the table, took her sewing, and I told her, weeping all the time, of our father's long absence—of our terrified flight from our cruel landlady.

"The wretch!" said Mary, indignantly; "my dear children, you shall never go back there again; you shall stay here till your father comes."

For a moment I was quite delighted, then a sudden thought, and I said,

"But if our father should come back Mary, he could not find us and we should lose him forever."

"That's true, I never thought of it; I'll tell you what we can do, though; I am married, Miss Irene; I expect my husband in every minute, as soon as ever he comes he shall

go home with you and speak something to the woman, that will make her quiet; if your father don't come to-morrow you shall come here."

This plan seemed to me very good. I consented to it. Kind Mary tried to cheer us in every possible way, and in a few moments her husband came in. Mary told him all. I named the street where we lived, forgotten now, and with our hands in his we set off, after affectionately kissing Mary good-night. His name was John, an honest, kind-hearted laborer. He talked to us as we walked along, but I was too sad and anxious to answer him. We reached at length the old place. John rang the bell and the woman herself answered it.

"I brought back these poor children, ma'am," he said; "I want you to be kind to them, and if their father don't come back, I'll pay you myself; my name is John Morgan."

At this assurance the hard face of the woman softened. She said it was all right, and told us to go up stairs. We bade John good-night and hastened to our room. I had undressed Estelle and partly myself; while wringing the water from my long hair, I turned my face from her to hide the tears that still rolled over my cheeks. At this moment there was a step upon the stairs—I listened—it approached. I held my breath in intense anxiety; it stopped upon the landing, the door was opened, and, uttering convulsive cries of joy, we were locked in our father's arms.

Oh my father! my idolized father! thou hast long since passed away from this melancholy life, but still I seem to feel the clasp of thy protecting arms—I am held once more to thy noble heart, in ineffable happiness.

It was a long time before we were calm enough to listen to anything; we all wept with joy, and held each other tightly embraced, as though fearing to be again separated.

At last my father drew us to a chair, sat down and took us on his knees. He removed his hat, and I observed he was extremely pale, and deep melancholy pervaded his beautiful, exquisite brow.

"My beloved children, oh, how I have suffered in being away from you! Where do you think your father has been?"

"Oh dear, dear pa, where have you been? How we have cried; we thought we should never see you any more;" and Estelle as she spoke began to weep again at the recollection.

"I will tell you; you may know nothing but force could have kept me from you, my blessed children, the only things on earth I love. Well, your poor father was put into prison and locked up until four o'clock to-day. I went the morning I left you, directly to H——. I had to put a few finishing touches to one of the portraits. In a few hours it was completed. I went to the man—the villain who had engaged me to paint his family—took him to the studio, showed him the portraits, and upon his expressing his satisfaction, requested him with delicacy to settle with me. He replied that it was not convenient at that time; in a week or two he would do so. I condescended so far as to tell him I needed the money, and that my children were in want. He replied arrogantly, that he had said all he had to say upon the subject. I remonstrated, and he replied rudely, insultingly. I was indignant, I became furious, rushed to my easel, seized a brush and daubed the freshly laid on colors until the portraits were no longer recognizable. He ran to me and struck me, but did I not return his blow with interest? The house was roused, the family, servants, and police officers came rushing in, I was seized and dragged away, and your poor father was thrown into a prison like a

common felon. Oh ! what agonies I endured, thinking of my children ; I thought I should have died that long dreadful night. Morning came at last, but I had to wait my turn for examination, and it did not come until four o'clock this afternoon. After an hour passed in torture, during which I and the witnesses were examined, it was decided that I should be released, and the only punishment of the man who had insulted me, was to pay me for the portraits I had not destroyed. This he was obliged to do upon the spot. Oh ! how I longed to cast it back at him and tell him, "take it, pitiful wretch, I give you my labor ;" but the thought of my children conquered my pride ; I accepted it and rushed home. I find you here my precious babes, wet, cold and covered with tears. Where have you been ? tell me quickly, Irene ?"

Large drops of sweat stood upon his brow, and he looked exhausted. I wiped them away with the skirt of my dress, and laying my cheek close to his, with my arms around his neck, I told him all our grief and terror, our wanderings ; and how by a wonderful chance we met Mary, and were brought safely home. He clasped us closer, and for the first time I felt his tears drop upon my face. We were all silent at last, and quite wearied out with so much excitement, we half fell asleep in his arms ; and then he gently roused us, helped us to undress, and then lifted us into bed, murmuring softly, with the good-night kiss, "God bless and guide you ever, my sweet children."

Then he quitted the bed-side, and I saw him moving about the room, until my eyes closed, and remembering my nightly prayer, I folded my hands upon my bosom, and lifted my heart to the Creator, with a child's trust and unspeakable thankfulness.

CHAPTER IV.

For some time after this things went on better. My father obtained a young gentleman for a pupil in Latin and Greek. The remuneration he received for instructing him, enabled us, with the most severe economy, to live.

My birthday came ; I was nine years old. One year had greatly changed me ; from a careless child I had become a thoughtful, melancholy girl. I was tall and womanly, in appearance, for my age. My form was slight but round ; my features somewhat regular, and more formed than children's usually are. My dark brown hair, large blue eyes, languid and thoughtful, and the extreme paleness of my white complexion, made me look very unlike English children, whose faces are usually so rosy and joyous.

Estelle, though but a year and a half younger than I, was yet much smaller, but her form was perfect ; already she was a little Venus. Her features were beautiful, and her complexion delicately fair. Nothing could be imagined more lovely than her dark grey eyes, fringed with long black lashes, and beaming with an expression of tenderness, I have never seen in any other. To complete the portrait, fine, long and thick hair, almost brown in the shade, but of the brightest gold in the sun, waving in natural ringlets around this charming, innocent face.

We loved each other fondly. She, with the clinging tenderness of her nature, and I with the protecting devotion of mine.

CHAPTER V.

I COME to speak now of the saddest thing in all my life—full of sadness as it has been. From day to day I observed a change in my poor father. Amid all our privations he had always had kind words and cheering smiles for us ; now he returned to us after an absence of hours, gloomy and indifferent, and went to his bed, uttering a few unintelligible words, or in silence. It was a long time before I could comprehend it—but it came to me at last—my father, the man of genius and refinement, sought in taverns forgetfulness of his sorrows. Unpitying is the world's judgment on those who sink beneath the harsh trials of life. They forget that the man of genius is differently constituted to the rest of mankind. My poor father, worshiping his art, so beautiful, but yet so little appreciated, too proud and elevated in character to condescend to the low chicanery of the world for success, with a spirit too sensitive for persevering energy, there was no escape for him from his crushing poverty. Awaking from his beautiful day-dreams, he beheld himself and his children starving in a garret ; looking into the future he saw nothing but the repetition of these scenes of misery, and all the powers of his mind sank in utter despondency. The genius, that, under happier circumstances, would have raised him to wealth and position, now drove him to degrade himself. And daily he grew more reckless,

and our situation was indeed deplorable. Incessantly removing from one place to another, (for in a few days people would discover the state of things, and request us to find other rooms;) always alone, and often suffering for the requisites of life, constantly hearing people say, "see those children with that wretched man. Why are they not taken from him and provided for?" Was it not too much for us poor children? And then at the thought of being separated from my father, trembling and weeping, I mentally vowed that death alone should part us. And so indeed it proved.

God alone knows how we lived for many weary months. Ah! how often, when poor, weary Estelle had gone supperless to bed, I sat with a book I had borrowed, or with only my own thoughts to entertain me, waiting my father's return; for no matter how late he remained out, I never slept until I saw him. Sometimes in those long hours of loneliness, I amused myself by recalling all the beautiful tales of fairies, and genii, I had ever read. Then the dark, desolate garret, stretched away into a magnificent hall, gleaming with a thousand lights. Lovely beings offered me gems and flowers, and I forgot the terrible reality, till the door opened and I saw my father, lividly pale, looking wildly at me; then tottering a few steps fall to the floor insensible. Sitting on the floor beside him, holding his head upon my lap, bathing him with my tears until worn out, I placed a pillow beneath his head, and stole to the side of Estelle. These, and far worse, were scenes of daily occurrence for a long, long time. I have not the heart to dwell upon minute details—I am too wretched in recalling them.

And yet lost, degraded as he had become, how we loved and clung to him. In my deep respect for him, I never dared to urge him, not to make us so wretched. Often I went to him with a beating heart, the words of entreaty

trembling on my lips, but at the sight of his pale and haggard face, his listless, despairing attitude, my courage failed me and I was silent. Sometimes, however, he remained himself for two or three days, then, by little commissions, petty things, that he would have scorned in happier years, he obtained bread for us.

CHAPTER VI.

ONE day we were alone, as usual ; I was mending a dress for Estelle or myself, when some one knocked at the door. Estelle opened it, and a man's voice said,

"Does Mr. Stewart live here?"

"Yes sir," answered Estelle timidly, "but he is not in now."

"Ah!" said the stranger, and after a moment's pause, he walked into the room, and perceiving me, approached saying,

"Ah! young ladies, are you Mr. Stewart's children?"

"Yes sir," I replied.

"And he is not at home? I have spoken to him about taking charge of a school in the country, and told him I would call to-day or to-morrow; did'nt he leave some message for me?"

"My father did not say anything about it to me, sir. Is it a school in the country did you say, sir?"

"Yes, my child, a school I wish to get a teacher for. Your father seemed anxious to take it. I came to see him about it to-day; I am sorry he is not in."

I was all anxiety; my heart beat at the prospect of leaving gloomy, horrible London—of a comfortable independent life, made me giddy with joy. I looked attentively at the stranger; he was a man somewhat advanced in life, large, with a cheerful, benevolent face, and kind manners. I said to him timidly, but with anxiety, and emotion in my tone,

"Do you think, sir, that you will employ my father? I should like so much, so very much, to live in the country."

"I think very probable, my child. Do you expect him home soon?"

"No sir, not for some hours."

"Well, then, I will call at ten o'clock to-morrow morning. Will you tell your father to be sure and be at home?"

"I will, sir."

"Good-by, my children," he said kindly, as he departed.

My thoughts were in such a whirl for the rest of that day that I could not reply to Estelle's questions.

Oh! thought I, if my father could but obtain this, how happy we should be. Then the dreadful state of things occurred to me; if the gentleman should discover it he would never engage my father; my childish mind was quite unable to settle the question, and I waited anxiously for my father's return. He came early, and to my great surprise, perfectly himself. We ran eagerly to him, and I related what had happened, and the appointment for the next morning; then very, very falteringly I said,

"You will accept dear papa—we shall be so happy—and you will for me—and—and Estelle—you will—dear papa." I stopped, my heart was too full, and burst into tears. An expression of deep humiliation passed over my father's face, he drew away his hand, and turning away, sank into a chair, covering his face with his hands. Frightened at my own audacity, thinking I had wounded or offended him, I crept timidly to his side and knelt down. I was thinking what I should say, when he raised his head and said in a cheerful tone, though his face was very sad,

"Indeed I am most anxious to see this person; if I can get this place how fortunate it will be. Spring is coming, you will see for the first time the green fields and bright

skies of the country, you will be removed from the horrible destitution you have suffered so long. I trust in God I may be able to succeed in something for once in my life."

"Oh Irene! how delightful to see the little birds, and bright flowers, as we have read of them in our books," said Estelle turning to me, her sweet face radiant with smiles.

"Yes, and to leave dirty, dark London," answered I, and seeing our father had fallen into a reverie, we kissed him and went gaily to our straw beds.

The next morning after our breakfast, my father told us to put on our things and go and take a walk; "I wish Irene," he said to me "to see this gentleman alone; stay out for an hour or two."

Having so much time before us we wandered off to Regent's Park. This place was enchanted ground for me. The lovely women reclining so lightly on the cushions of their carriages, their magnificent dresses of silk and velvet, waving plumes and furs, their gay faces and smiling salutations to their friends, the prestige of beauty and refinement that surrounded them, rendered this a fairy scene to my young eyes; I could not realize that those beautiful beings were ordinary mortals like us; they were always young, charming and happy, I thought. Ah, the sweet romance of youth, how enchanting it is—but alas! how short lived. We lingered so long that it was almost noon when we got back. My father was pacing the floor. I knew the moment I saw him that he had been successful.

"Ah, my dear children," he exclaimed, "it is all right, Mr. Armstrong is the kindest man in the world. The salary of this school is not large, but sufficient to live upon, and imagine his kindness, perceiving, no doubt, from the appearance of things, what my situation was, he offered me an advance of my salary to provide whatever may be requisite

to go. Without this I know not what we should have done."

"When do we go, papa?" I inquired

"As soon as possible—to-morrow if we can; I have only to provide some clothing for both of you, and myself also, then we are all ready, and oh! with what joy shall I quit London."

We were crazy with joy, and laughed, and danced about the room, like perfect mad-caps.

The next morning we were ready to start. My father had purchased for us some ready-made clothing that enabled us to appear respectable.

Our poor old ragged clothes were packed in our little trunk as mementos of our gipsy life, and conveyed to the stage office. Mr. Armstrong was to accompany us to the village of A——. At ten we all got into the stage. After half an hour of delay and confusion we drove away. It was a long time before we got out of London, but at length the roads were wider, and here and there trees, and then we left London behind, and the air felt purer, and we saw the fields stretching away; I recollect it was a very mild day for the season, and my father allowed us to have the window down. To my childish eyes everything was beautiful and mysterious; the little wild flowers in the road, the gray clouds floating in the sky, were invested with an undefinable charm by my imagination. Toward evening the next day we arrived at A——. Being late in the day, we stopped that night at the little inn, and the next morning Mr. Armstrong conducted us to the school-house, and our little residence which stood near it. Our house was situated on a gentle hill a little way out of the village. It did not front toward the village, and directly before it rose an almost perpendicular mountain; to the right were wide,

open fields, bounded only by mountains in the distance, and on the left, some yards distant, was a deep gulf-like ravine. A small white-washed frame house it was, plainly but comfortably furnished, and surrounded by ground for a garden. It seemed to me to be a paradise ; I looked at and admired everything, but more than all the beautiful landscape. The school-house stood on the other side of the ravine, and in order to get to it, we had to go down into the street. It was only one large room for the school. Our house had four rooms: The door opened into a large sitting-room, out of it were two little bed-rooms, and below stairs a kitchen. We took up our residence there that day. Mr. Armstrong did not live in A——, but he was the proprietor of the school, and employed and paid the teacher. As soon as he had seen us comfortably settled he returned home, and now commenced the happiest period of all my life.

CHAPTER VII.

My father opened the school, into which we were immediately introduced. Estelle and I had never in our lives had any companionship, save each other's, and sometimes our father's. I am certain I do not speak from vanity, when I say, that we were born with refinement of feeling. The education we had received from our father, developed and strengthened it, for in the midst of the greatest excesses he was always a gentleman. Timid and sensitive, we shrank at first from the rough, bold, and often vulgar children, of which the school was composed. By degrees, however, partly from the naturally social nature of children, partly because our father told us it was impolite to offend them, we came to like them better. As to the rest we improved rapidly under our father's tuition, as any one possessing the least talent could not fail to do, uniting as he did to his great ability and splendid education, the peculiar patience and kindness requisite for a teacher.

With a suddenness and firmness most astonishing, my father abandoned the habit that had so long enslaved him. His health enfeebled, almost destroyed by excess, want and despair, was gradually restored in our calm and regular life, in the certainty of something, however small, to provide for the wants of his children. His morbid and lonely mind, no longer tormented by the envy and rivalry of those of his own profession, settled into something like serenity. In a few weeks we were entirely domesticated in our little home.

My father manufactured an easel, and set it up in his bedroom, where the light was favorable, and sent to London to obtain a few brushes, pencils, canvases, etc., and once more the old familiar objects of sketches, half finished heads, and glowing landscapes, met my delighted eyes. This was only for the amusement of his leisure hours, for among these uncultivated villagers there was no appreciation of the arts. Occasionally, however, some farmer brought his buxom wife or daughter, to sit for her portrait, which my father always obliged them by painting at the cheapest rate.

We had a patient, kind old woman for a servant; old dame Margaret she was called; it was she who marketed, cooked, washed, and in short did everything that required to be done, and she was so honest and faithful in attending to our wants, that we soon became attached to her.

The spring advanced rapidly, already the wide open ground around our house was covered with fresh and shining grass—already on the bank of the ravine I have mentioned the lovely wild flowers began to appear.

After school hours my father amused himself in cultivating our garden. He gave one bed to Estelle, another to me, and the rest he took charge of himself. A path over the mountain, that rose not more than two hundred yards from our door, led into a beautiful romantic wood—from this we transplanted flowers, shrubs, and little trees. Very soon, within the fence that surrounded our home, clustered and glowed the rose, violet, lily, jessamine, and numberless others, whose names I knew not, but which were beautiful in their freshness and purity.

Ah! the memory of those summer days, how they come back to me. Often, when a little tired of planting and weeding our flowers, Estelle and I leaned upon the garden gate, and sometimes watching our father who never wearied,

or raising our eyes to the sky, which seemed to me perfectly beautiful, with its deep azure and fleecy white clouds, which the sun at setting faintly tinged with gold; we listened to the lowing of the cattle as they returned home, and felt the soft summer air playing with our hair. At such moments an inexpressible feeling of happiness used to fall upon me. I cannot analyze or describe, indeed, at this time, I can but dimly recall it. A tranquil sense of beauty and harmony, a serenity so perfect that it seemed more than earthly, entirely filled my soul, and thus lost in a sweet reverie, I would remain till my father's or sister's voice recalled me to myself. Often Estelle and I, wandering in the thick wood, wove wreaths of flowers, and imagined ourselves sylphs, or wood-nymphs, with the sweet romance that always disappears with youth, and sometimes with childhood.

One beautiful day, I think it was in July, my father, Estelle and I, started for the wood, an hour before sunset, each taking a basket to bring home some flowers. After we had filled them, we went gayly out of the wood; as we climbed over the stile, we saw the sun sinking behind the distant hills. There were some moss-grown rocks beside us, we put down our baskets and seated ourselves to rest. From the brow of this mountain all the landscape lay below. The distant blue hills, the waving fields of corn and grass, the village dotted here and there with little gardens, and our own home, were all bathed in the mellow light of the setting sun, which tinged the clouds with purple and gold. With a sad and dreamy gaze my father's eyes dwelt upon this scene for some minutes, and then addressing me, but seeming, I thought, to speak more to himself, he said,

"Do you see, Irene, what radiant colors the sun lends those masses of colorless vapor? just as beautiful, illusive,

and transitory are the visions of youth. In the first flush of youth and hope, with what free and glorious aspirations my heart bounded, with what a fresh and buoyant spirit I started in the race for glory ; lovely forms crowded my dreams, there seemed no difficulty too great for me to surmount. I did not measure my own strength, how want, the chilling coldness of the world, and more than all, its want of enthusiasm killed my own. Images of beauty and grace, that lived and glowed in my thoughts, were cold and lifeless when I would have given them life upon the canvas. The animating fire was wanting, and, if sometimes I succeeded in giving them vitality, how few, how very few, appreciated it; and then came poverty, and instead of dreaming of fame, I had to think of how I should obtain bread, and then, at last, it seemed to me that even at the best, our toils for renown have no adequate reward, and so one by one they faded, the bright illusions, and left me, as the sun has left the clouds, somber and cold."

Involuntarily, as he had spoken, I had drawn nearer, and looking intently at him, strove to understand his meaning, but his thoughts were wandering so far beyond my reach that I comprehended very vaguely. After a moment's silence he drew us gently to him, and putting back Estelle's golden curls and my brown locks, he said,

"I should not say so, for I have these, still more beautiful than any poet's dream, and yet it is you, poor children, that when I dare think, make me most sad."

He sighed, rose and took his basket, saying, "come, let's go home," and we took our's and followed him.

With all our sad experience we were but children still, and no thought of the future ever cast a shadow on our spirits in those summer days. They glided calmly and rapidly away, vacation was almost over, the mornings and evenings were

beginning to grow cold. One night we had just finished tea, and dame Margaret had cleared the table; my father had abandoned the book he had been reading, to teach me the game of draughts. Estelle had been engaged in endeavoring to copy a natural rose, placed in a glass before her, but had turned from it to watch my progress in learning, over my shoulder; at this moment some one knocked at the door. Visitors were rather unusual with us, for my father, solitary in his habits, did not seek the society of those around, it was, therefore, with a little surprise that I rose and went to open the door. A man was standing on the threshold.

"Is Mr. Stewart in?" he said.

"Yes, sir, walk in," I replied.

He came in and my father rose and asked him to sit down. He took a seat rather awkwardly; he was a coarse, vulgar looking man, and clownish in his manner. He took off his hat and said abruptly,

"I s'pose, sir, you didn't hear that Mr. Armstrong is dead?"

My father started violently—

"Dead?" he said, "and when did he die?"

"Very suddenly, sir, three weeks ago. I am a relation of his, and the trustee of the school now."

A strange foreboding of evil came over me. I looked earnestly at the hard, rough face of this man and then at my father, whose glance was troubled. There was a moment's silence and then the man continued—

"Yes, I am the trustee now, and I've got a little something to say to you about that. You see, sir, there seems to be some dissatisfaction among the folks, and I think we will have to get another teacher for the next term."

My father became lividly pale.

"What do you mean by dissatisfaction?" he said leaning

forward, and looking at the man with a glance that made him shrink back.

"Beg pardon, sir, didn't mean no offence, but you see, sir, there's been a man down here from London, Barton's his name, and he told the people something there, what makes 'em disinclined to have you teach the school. It isn't none of my business, only jist if they want a new teacher to git 'em one, that's all."

"This man, this Barton, I don't know him; what does he know? what does he say of me?" said my father, in a voice that smote upon my heart, so full it was of stifled suffering.

"Sure, sir, I don't want to say what he said, howsomever, it was somethin' 'bout knowin' ye in London, and ye wasn't a proper person to teach children, and so the long and short of it is, they want another teacher."

My father drew a long, deep breath, and his eyes rested on Estelle and I, then seeming to nerve himself for a great effort, he said,

"Sir, I am desirous of keeping this situation; I have, in every respect, performed my duty faithfully; the people have nothing to complain of. I should be obliged to you if you would use your influence in my favor."

Only those who have condescended to ask a favor from one immediately below them can appreciate the sacrifice my father made in speaking thus to that clown, but it was for his children that he lowered his pride.

The man picked up his hat from the floor, put it on his head, and got on his feet.

"It wouldn't be of no use, sir," he said, "for me to say nothin'. The people's mighty stubborn in these parts, when they takes a notion, they wants it that way and no other. I don't want to hurry ye, sir, but in a week, ye know, the

school begins and we'd like this 'ouse as soon as ye can conveniently move."

He shuffled along towards the door, and when he reached it, stopped for one moment with his hand upon the latch, and said,

"I s'pose you understand all quite right, it couldn't possible be fixed no other way. Good night, sir."

No one responded, and the door closed after him. There was perfect silence for two or three minutes, and then my father buried his face in his hands, and his whole frame shook with convulsive emotion. Many would think this childish in a man. Where was his energy and endurance? they would say. Ah, nought but experience can teach one the desolation of cruel, friendless poverty. In a moment like this every heart-breaking grief, bitter disappointment, and stinging humiliation comes rushing back—we suffer long buried sorrows again. Thus it was with my poor father, as he sat with the large tears rolling their way through his fingers and falling on the table. Estelle and I went softly and sadly, and wound our arms around him, but we found no word of consolation except, "Dear papa, don't," till at last, his strong emotion spent itself, and in a tone of deepest melancholy, he murmured, "what will become of my dear children?" He was silent for many minutes and then said,

"They cling to me and I must not give up; I will strive a little longer for their sakes. No money and not one friend upon the earth—God help us! I will try. Call Margaret, Estelle, and go to bed, poor children."

Estelle obeyed, and presently Margaret appeared with a lamp. She glanced anxiously at my father as we went into our room, and when the door closed, she said in a whisper,

"What ails papa, children?"

Estelle shook her head, and Margaret continued,

“ If there’s anythin’ poor old Margaret can do it will be done, ye may be sure.”

She undressed and put us into bed and kissed us good-night, taking the light away with her as she went. For a long time I was kept awake by the sound of my father’s footsteps, agitatedly pacing the other room.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE breakfasted alone next morning—our father had gone out very early, Margaret said, restless and melancholy. I wandered about the house and garden for two or three hours, until I saw him coming up the gently sloping lawn, and ran to meet him.

“Where have you been, papa?” I asked.

He clasped my hand and drew me along.

“My poor child,” he said, “I have been looking once more for a place where we may rest our weary heads.”

“Oh, papa,” I said, and for the first time I realized it, “have we certainly got to move? to leave our dear little home?”

“Yes, quite sure, my poor child,” replied my father, as we ascended the steps and entered the house, then throwing himself heavily into a chair, he said,

“Irene, tell dame Margaret to bring me a cup of coffee; I have not eaten a morsel this morning.”

I ran down stairs and told Margaret, who was passing about.

“The poor man,” she said, “I’ve kept his coffee warm for him,” and she picked up the coffee-pot from among the coals on the hearth, and hastened up stairs and arranged his breakfast on the table which had been left standing. All the little comforts that were around us, trifles, it is true, but still valued by those who had suffered as we had, seemed to make my father feel how soon we were to lose them. He

ate nothing, and while drinking his coffee, called me to him and said, in a low voice,

“I think we had better move to-day, Irene, it has got to be done, and the sooner the better. I should not like, in addition to all the rest, that the new teacher should come and turn me out of this house—no, we had better go at once.”

He fell suddenly into melancholy thought, as I perceived from his abstracted glance.

“And where are we going, papa,” I asked, in a very sad and doubting tone.

“Into the old wretched desolation, I fear. I found, this morning, that the reports of that man—God’s curse light upon him,” he added with startling vehemence, “has prejudiced the whole village against me. They forget, in their ignorance and stupidity, that they have known me for months and ought to be aware of what I am. They all knew that I was no longer the teacher, and I found it impossible to get a decent, comfortable house ; indeed I thought I should get none, not even a shelter. At last I found a miserable place, almost a hut. The man who owned it was willing to let me have it, and I took it. There is no furniture, of course, but I have a little money and can buy some straw beds, a pine table and some chairs, and we will try to live till something better can be obtained. It will be better than the road, and what can we do? What better off should we be in desolate London, or in any other village, penniless as I am? What is there for the poor and unfriended but the grave?”

“Oh, papa, don’t say so,” I said deprecatingly, frightened at his despairing tone.

He was silent a few moments, then turning his head, he called Margaret, who, during our conversation, had gone into our bedroom ; she came in with her kind, honest face troubled.

“Margaret,” said my father, “we are going to move to-

day, and I am not going to teach the school any more. I owe you a month's wages; well, my poor woman, I cannot pay you now, but I hope I may be able to soon; at present, if I pay you, I must let my children starve, and I do not think that is my duty. I don't know how we are to live without a servant. I am sorry on your account, dame Margaret, as well as on ours. You have been very kind to the children, and they are attached to you, but it cannot be helped."

Margaret busied herself in putting the breakfast things on the tray. At last, with her face very red, looking down, and speaking very quickly, she answered,

"I am very sorry, sir, very sorry—it isn't of no matter 'bout the wages; I'm sorry—" then suddenly breaking off, she picked up the tray and disappeared down the kitchen stairs.

"She is a good, honest creature," said my father, appreciating poor Margaret's delicacy, a quality very rarely met with in any station.

"Now, my children, go and pack up your things; I want to get moved and settled, even if it be in a hovel. We are certain of it for a little while, for I have paid for it for three months."

I put my arm around Estelle, and we went into our room and commenced our preparations. We had been there about half an hour when Margaret came in.

"What are you doing, my blessed children?" she inquired.

"Packing up, Margaret," replied Estelle.

"And what are ye doin' it for when I'm here; run into the garden and play—I'll do everythin' that's to be done."

"Oh! no, Margaret!" I said, "you know what papa told you."

"Sure it's no matter if I chose to do it, don't I love you

both like my own children that's in heaven, I hope, and the only one I've got on earth, that's far away. Run away, now, and let me do it."

Tears were in her eyes. We were so touched and grateful, that we hung around her neck and kissed her, and then she pushed us gently out and shut the door, and we went into our father's room. He was sitting by the window, quite lost in thought, but got up when he saw us.

"I should have been busy," he said, "but I have been dreaming; I have dreamed all my life."

He opened his trunk, and taking from the pegs, where they hung, the few articles of clothing he possessed, folded and placed them in it; then some favorite books, and then he shut and locked it.

"Papa," said Estelle, "what are you going to do with all the little pictures?"

He made no reply, but walking around the room, he took them all from the nails or shelves where they had been placed, and lastly the one from the easel, an unfinished portrait of myself, and going to the window threw them out into the long grass.

"Let the dogs take them," he said bitterly, "what have they ever been to me but a curse?"

I was half frightened at his dark despairing look, and said not a word; but a few moments after, I stole out, and gathered up the pictures and locked them up in my own trunk.

In a little while we were all ready to go. We looked around for Margaret to bid her good-by, but she had disappeared and was no where to be found. My father had employed some one to carry our trunks to the new abode, and we all started on our melancholy walk. Our breaking up had been so sudden that though I had felt very sad and desolate that day, I had not realized that we were positively

to leave our pretty, comfortable house, our bright, lovely flowers and favorite haunts ; but at the last moment I felt, and I stopped at the little gate, looking around, burst into tears. My father drew me gently along by the hand saying,

“Come—come, my child, no tears, we must all try now and have courage, for we shall need it.”

“My flowers, papa, can I not take them with me ?”

“And mine too, papa !” said Estelle.

“There is no place to plant them where we are going, my children—no, leave them there for my successor.”

The house where we were going was some distance. As we walked through the village the old women, and some of the school children, out before their doors, turned and looked after us and whispered together, and occasionally a school girl would halloo, “How d’ye do, Irene and Estelle ?” and we replied to their rough salutations and hurried on. We came in sight of our future home at last, and a few more steps brought us up to it. It stood quite alone on a little hill. It was a small wooden house, black with age, and gloomy—oh ! how gloomy and dilapidated it looked to me. My father lifted the latch and we entered. If possible, it was worse inside than out ; there was one dirty, barren room, and a sort of little kitchen out of it—these were all the house contained. There was but one window in the large room, and the heavy window shutter, half closed, excluded the cheerful light of day. There was not a vestige of furniture, and as the boy set down our trunk I sank down upon it, and covered my face with my dress to conceal my tears. My father paid the boy and dismissed him, and then looking at the dirty walls and floor, and the wide open, dreary fireplace, he said,

“Surely I have fallen as low as it is possible for me to fall—this is desolation itself.”

"Papa," said Estelle, "what are we going to do without any furniture?"

"I must go immediately and get what I can," he answered, passing his hand over his beautiful brow, which wore an expression of melancholy peculiar to him. "I will return very soon," he added as he departed.

I philosophized with myself, and concluded it was best to be as patient and cheerful as possible. After a few moments Estelle and I took off our bonnets and put them on the trunks, (as there was no where else to put them,) then we walked into the kitchen to take a general survey. It was a *very*, very little place, with a large fireplace and one window; everything was dust and dirt, and looked altogether desolate. We went to the window, opened it and looked out. There was an uninterrupted view of fields, bounded by the blue hills, and diversified here and there with clumps of foliage which autumn had begun to variegate with bright tints. It was very pleasant and cheerful, and we stood looking at it, talking about our flowers, about the romantic old ravine on whose banks we had loved so much to play; and of graver subjects too, of our poor dear father, and our poverty and friendlessness, when I heard the door of the other room open and some one enter. We went quickly in, but instead of our father as we had expected, it was dame Margaret. We ran eagerly to her. She did not speak a word, but stood looking around the room, at last she said,

"Sure this is a dark, dirty place for ye, my children, it's worse nor me own little shed. And this is the place ye're goin to live in?"

"Yes, Margaret," I replied, "it is not as pretty or comfortable as our home was, but we have got to live here for the present. Ah, Margaret, I don't know how we are to get along; how I wish you could live with us. I wonder

who is to cook for us, I am sure I cant," I added, very sorrowfully.

And what's the reason I'm not to live with ye, my pets?" said Margaret.

"Oh, Margaret! you know papa told you he could not pay you, not even what he owes you."

Margaret laughed, took off her bonnet, and replied,

"Don't trouble 'bout the pay. I'm poor, it's true, but I can get work enough beside what I do for ye, to gain me livin'. I'e don't believe now that old Margaret would leave ye two young creatures, without a body to lift a hand for ye? Sure, I'll not do it."

"Really, are you going to live with us and work for us without any pay, dame Margaret," said Estelle, earnestly.

"As long as I've got hands to work, I'll do for ye, me children; and now if I had a broom," added she, looking about, "I'd sweep this dirty floor."

At this moment the door opened and my father entered. A cart was standing before the door, and I saw that it contained furniture. My father stood in the door, and told the cartman to hand him the articles, and as he did so he placed them on the floor. These were some common chairs and a table, two cots, and two straw mattresses, and some bed covering; some cooking utensils and crockery. Margaret, Estelle and I picked up the chairs as they were set upon the floor, and ranged them around the room; put the table in the center of it, set up the cots, and threw the beds upon them, and moved pots and kettles on the hearth; so that when my father turned and entered, after the cart rolled away, the room appeared somewhat more decent, and habitable. For the first time he perceived Margaret.

"Why, Margaret!" he said, looking surprised, "you are here!"

"Yes sir," answered Margaret, courtesying, for she always had the greatest respect for my father; "I couldn't make up my mind to leave the children without any body to do anythin' for 'em, so I came, and I'll do the best I can to make 'em comfortable."

"You are a faithful, good woman," said my father warmly, "and I am a thousand times obliged to you Margaret, for truly I did not know how we were to manage."

Margaret looked pleased, bustled about, swept the floor with a broom she had borrowed from a neighbor, and afterwards kindled a fire in the hitchen with some wood she had obtained from the same source; then my father gave her a little money, and she hurried out and soon returned with some provisions, and in a little while we sat down to our first dinner in our new habitation. As there were but two beds, there was no place for Margaret to sleep. We agreed that she should return home at night, to the house which she occupied in common with another woman, and come to us early in the morning. It was already nearly night, and after making up our bed in the large room, and our father's, at his request, in the kitchen, Margaret left us; and shortly after barricading our little hut as well as we were able, we went to our straw beds, and soon forgot all our griefs and anxieties in blessed repose.

CHAPTER IX.

NEXT morning we were all astir early. After breakfast my father told me he was going to see the village curate, to try and interest him in his behalf—so that, in case he should hear of an available offer, he might have some one to refer to for character and capacity.

Left alone, Estelle and I sought for something to amuse us. We watched for a while dame Margaret, as she bustled about, and then, taking a book, (our school reader,) we sat down by the window in the large room, with our arms around each other, and read with great earnestness for a long time; then we put on our sun-bonnets and went out.

The bright sunshine and fresh air made us very gay; child-like, we forgot every thing but the present moment, and chased ducks and geese, and climbed hills till we were quite breathless with fatigue. At length we turned homeward. As we approached, I saw my father sitting by the open window; his face was profoundly melancholy. In an instant my gaiety abandoned me; I hastened in, and running to him, laid my hand upon his shoulder.

“What is the matter, papa? Have you seen the curate?” I asked anxiously.

“Yes—I have seen him; and he told me he could do nothing—say nothing for me, unless he could be convinced that the reports which that man circulated were not true. I went to several others whom I thought might by chance

have remained my friends, and received from all the same answer; so that now, even should I hear of a situation as teacher, I know not how I should obtain it, having no one to whom I can refer. There are few Mr. Armstrongs in this world—few who possess his benevolence of character, or his perception to discriminate for themselves.”

“Dear papa,” I said, “you must not fret; you know we did not know any thing good was to happen to us, two days before we left London. Something like that may come again; so don’t be so sad, dear papa;” and I sat down on his knee, and strove with all my power to cheer him, but vainly.

Every day for a week this was repeated. My father went out to look at the newspapers, and answer any advertisement for a teacher that he found; but time passed, and he received no reply to his applications, and the little money he possessed was fast diminishing. One night, at the expiration of two weeks, after Margaret had gone home, my father said to us:

“Well, children, we shall have to fast to-morrow; I have not a farthing in the world!”

Estelle and I looked gravely at each other, and then at our father; it was certainly a subject of serious consideration; but all our thoughts did not better the matter. At last I said:

“No money, papa! What are we to do?”

“That’s just the question—what are we to do?” answered my father, looking intently at the floor. There was a pause, and then he said:

“I see nothing before us but pauperism; I do not believe I could obtain employment as a common field laborer, were I to ask it. I have not a farthing; I can get nothing to do here or elsewhere, for I have no friends. Yes, we shall have to beg—to become paupers.”

He spoke this with an icy bitterness, and rising,

commenced pacing the room, as was his wont when agitated.

"As regards myself," he continued, "life has been a burden to me for a long time; were it not for you, I would lie down by the roadside and die without a murmur, so weary I am; but I cannot leave you alone in the world; I must still live and struggle, and suffer for your sakes."

There was so much real despair in his words, that I felt unequal to any attempt at consolation. Estelle and I drew nearer to each other, and she laid her head upon my shoulder, and in the moments of silence that followed she fell asleep. My father paced the floor for a long time, while my thoughts involuntarily wandered off, and I dreamed some of the beautiful queer things that come into children's minds. At last my father stopped before us and said:

"Poor child! she is tired; go to bed, both of you."

And I aroused her and obeyed. The only blessing we possessed was the sweet privilege of youth, that of sleeping even in the midst of the greatest sorrows.

Early in the morning Margaret's knock awoke me, and I got up to let her in.

"How do ye do?" she said, in her good humored way.

I sat down on the bed, and drawing the clothes over my naked feet, for it was chilly, I answered discontentedly:

"Oh! Margaret, I'm very unhappy indeed. There is nothing for breakfast, and papa has not a penny. Oh! what are we to do?" and as our truly dreadful situation forced itself upon my mind, I laid my head down in the bed-clothes and began to weep. Poor Margaret, how sorrowful she looked; in an instant, and when she saw me weeping, she laid her hand upon my head and said, very earnestly:

"Now, now, Irene, me child, ye mustn't; sure ye'll niver starve while I'm alive. See! I've got here two bright

shillings ; they'll git ye some breakfast, so now cheer up, me pet."

She was going quickly away, but I caught her dress.

"Stop, Margaret," I said, "you must not do it ; would you spend the money you work so hard to get for us ?"

"What ails the child ? Musn't people eat when they're hungry ? What odds is it who gets the money long as it's got ?"

"But it is yours, Margaret."

"Ah, well, ye 'ill make it up to me some day when you get rich. Now let me go, and keep quiet till I come back."

She hastened away, and I rose and dressed myself. My heart swelled with gratitude to her. I had always been attached to her, but now, for her generosity and fidelity to us, lonely and forsaken beings, I truly loved her. I forgot the inequality of birth, mind, education, and saw only her noble, disinterested heart. I heard my father moving about in the other room, and went in to inform him of her goodness. He was greatly astonished.

"Good creature," he said, "not only she gives us her labor, but her money. How shall we ever repay her ?"

I went back to my room and roused Estelle. In a few minutes Margaret came back, with her hands full of provisions, which she gaily put down on the table, and commenced making a fire. Hearing her voice, my father entered the room and going to her he said, extending his hand,

"Margaret, you are our only friend."

"Oh ! sir, I am only a poor servant," she replied, stepping back with great respect.

"You are our only friend," repeated he, as he warmly grasped and shook her hand, hard and brown with labor. From that hour Margaret would have walked through the

fire for my father. After he had gone that day she came to me, and said,

"Irene, me child, I've been thinkin' I'd bring over some clothes, I've got to wash for Mr. Morgan on the hill, and wash here to-day, at the same time I'm washing yours, because ye knows, me pet, I couldn't wash 'em all after I go home to night. Do yer think yer papa 'ad object?"

"Oh, no, Margaret," I said, "I know he would not, and I am sure I could not think of having you work at night, after working hard all day."

So it was agreed, and ever after that she brought all the work she obtained to our house. There were two or three rather wealthy families, living at country houses around the village, knowing old Margaret was poor, and old, and childless, they had kindly given her their washing, for some time back, so that she had plenty to do. Time flew on, and she worked at her wash tub, singing, in a sweet and plaintive voice ; and every farthing she earned she gave for our support. The cold weather set in, and then, with all her exertions, it was with difficulty she could obtain food and fuel to sustain the life it would have been better, far better, had never been bestowed upon us. Meanwhile my father was not idle, he still endeavored to hope and struggle on. He wrote letters to those, in London, who had once been his friends ; he answered every advertisement for a teacher, or a clerk, that he saw ; he humiliated himself to seek again the friendship of those who had once been his friends in the village ; but the days wore on in the same miserable way. January came, and all had been in vain—utterly in vain. Then it was, that I, who watched him with the anxiety of tender affection, perceived that he was becoming hopeless, I saw his energies flag, his unavailing efforts cease, and worse—oh, ten thousand times worse than all—I saw him sink into that

old, fatal, *fatal* vice again. It was a long time before Margaret discovered it; she evidently noticed the change in him, but knew not to what to attribute it. One night he was led home by two regulators of the village tavern. Margaret had to conduct him to his room, and when she came out and closed the door after her, she approached me as I stood silent and sorrowful beside poor weeping Estelle, with the tears running fast over her cheeks.

"Your blessed father, where is he goin' to take himself," she said, wiping away her tears with her apron. "Oh! it's a dreadful—dreadful thing. Oh! me Irene, ye'r older 'an ye'r sister, me dear, go to him for the Lord's sake, and ask him not to do so for his precious children.

"I am afraid, Margaret; talk to him yourself, to-morrow."

"I! I'd niver dare me child; I'm only a servant, ye'r his child, and he likes yer, I am sure."

I tried to nerve myself for the effort the next day. When our poor breakfast was ready I went to carry my father a cup of coffee. I expected to find him in bed, but he was up, sitting by the window, looking out at the bleak, frosty ground, and naked trees, with an expression of face so wretched that it made my heart ache. He took the coffee from my hand without seeming to see me. I sat down on a little wooden footstool, at his feet, and endeavored to speak, but I found myself choked, and began to sob and cry as though I was distracted. My father looked at me with a half bewildered glance and said hastily—

"Why, what's the matter, Irene? What ails you?"

But I could find no voice to answer, and hiding my tears in the skirt of my poor old dress, I went into the other room, and there wept myself calm, and then I said to Margaret.

"Don't ask me again to speak to papa, on that subject;

I can't indeed ; it is quite impossible, besides I know it would not be of any use, for poor dear papa has lost all heart."

Margaret turned away and began to arrange the fire, but not before I had seen that her eyes were full of tears.

Dear, kind Margaret, how can I do justice to her devotion to us in the weary days that followed. Week after week she came to us in the morning, and returned to her home at night, through heavy snows ; gave us all her hard earned means, mended our old worn garments, shared our loneliness, and, in short, acted toward us as the most faithful and devoted mother.

My friend, you weary of these scenes of poverty and misery. Patience a little longer, the shadows will soon close over them.

The quarter for which my father had paid expired, and the landlord was urgent for his rent. Margaret, by dint of working hard and economizing in everything as much as possible (though the good creature grieved, for our sakes, to be obliged to do so,) succeeded in saving the sum, which was but small, and paying the rent for the next quarter. She was very proud and happy when this was accomplished, and said to us, cheerfully,

"Ye are sure of a home now till spring, an' then please the Lord, somethin' better may come."

Poor Margaret, she hoped still, when hope had almost deserted me.

One night we were undressing to go to bed, when Estelle said to me, in her earnest, reflective way—

"Papa looks dreadfully, Irene ; he is so pale, his eyes have such a queer wild look, I never saw him look so before."

I could not bear to hear her say so.

"Don't talk so, Estelle," I said impatiently, "I don't see any change."

"Come and look at him while he sleeps," she answered, taking up a light and going to his door. I followed, we entered noiselessly, and approached the bed; Estelle shaded the light with her hand, and we stood silently gazing at him. He slept a leaden sleep, and breathed heavily. His arms were thrown over his head, and his black hair fell away from his beautiful, melancholy brow and lay upon his straw pillow. His face had such a fixed and deathly pallor that, had it not have been for his breathing, I should have believed him dead.

With a long wistful sigh I turned away; as I did so something lying on the little trunk, at the head of the bed, attracted my attention, I picked it up, it was a hard substance, rolled in a paper, about the size and shape of a small nut, and emitted a powerful stupefying odor. In wrapping it up again I saw a word written on the label. I held it to the light and read, "Opium." I did not then know what it was, or what was its use; afterwards, observing my father more particularly, I saw him eat large pieces of it very frequently. Its destroying effect upon him was every day more and more visible. How he obtained the means to buy it I never knew.

CHAPTER X.

Time passed. It was February. It had been an unusually cold winter, and the snow lay deep upon the ground. One morning my father did not come to breakfast, and I went to see what was the matter. He was sleeping, and his face was hot and flushed. I touched his arm to rouse him and when he opened his eyes I said,

“Are you sick, papa? Don’t you want some breakfast?”

“My head is burning,” he replied turning uneasily. “I don’t want anything to eat—I want rest, nothing but rest. Tell Estelle and Margaret to be as quiet as they can, and let me sleep a few hours and then I shall feel better.”

I went out, closed the door quietly, and told Estelle and Margaret what he had said.

We were all uneasy and anxious, and several times during the day stole in to see if he slept, or if he wanted anything. He was always in a sort of heavy doze, and seemed impatient and angry at being roused; he told me, at last, with great violence, that he wanted nothing but to be left entirely alone, that he did not wish to see a cursed human face. I was greatly terrified at his words and manner, not knowing how to understand them. When the time for Margaret to go home came, she said to me,

“Ask ye’r father if I shan’t stay and watch with him to night, or make ’im some herb tea.”

I went in very timidly. He was awake, and I spoke to him, and repeated what Margaret had said. He answered very kindly,

"No, my child, there is no place for her to sleep. I do not need any one to watch with me—I want nothing at all to-night. Thank her for her kindness.

I told her, and she put on her little woolen shawl and hood to depart. We followed her to the door, it was clear starlight, and very cold. She kissed us good night, as was her custom, and then walked quickly away. Was it the shadow of impending evil that lay so heavily upon my soul, as I watched her retreating into the darkness. We looked her quite out of sight, and then, chilled with the cold, we went in, and stole to our father's room, finding him apparently sleeping, we went to bed.

Margaret always came in the morning at six, or half past eight o'clock. I had been so accustomed to waking at that hour to admit her that it had become a habit. The next morning I awoke at the usual time, and lay waiting for her knock. Some minutes past, and not hearing, I fell asleep again; I must have slept an hour, for when I started up under the impression that something was wrong, the sun was shining through the holes in the shutters. Astonished at Margaret's absence I jumped up and dressed myself hastily, waked Estelle and told her Margaret had not come, and while she was dressing went into my father's room; the shutters were closed, and it was quite dark; I raised the windows and opened them a little. The noise woke my father, I went gently to the bedside, and said,

"How do you feel, papa? Are you better?"

I had no need, indeed, to ask the question. He was crimson with fever, and his languid and almost lifeless glance rested on me with a great effort as he replied:

"I am very ill, Irene ; my throat and head are on fire ; tell Margaret to come here, perhaps she can prescribe something for me."

"Margaret has not come, papa. I can't imagine where she is."

"Not come," said he in astonishment, "something must have happened. You had better go and see."

"Well, I will go," I said ; "shall I take Estelle with me, or do you want her to stay with you, papa?"

"Take her with you, if you like, but hasten back."

I ran into the other room, threw on my bonnet and shawl, and bidding Estelle do the same, we were ready in a minute, and started. Margaret lived about a half a mile distant, in one of a little clump of houses in the village. Our rapid walk soon brought us to it. Groups of women and children were collected around the door, some of them talking together with sad faces. My heart beat fearfully, dreading to hear some dreadful thing. I dared not ask a question. I was pushing my way into the house, when a woman, with a child in her arms, caught my arm—

"Are ye lookin' for Margaret?" she said, with tears in her eyes.

"Yes," I answered, tremblingly.

"Bad 'il be the news to ye, for poor Margaret is lyin' in there dead."

I uttered a loud cry, as though some one had struck me a mortal blow, and rushed into the house. On a bed, round which stood two or three women, lay our kind old friend. So natural and life-like she looked, I could not believe the terrible news. I took up her hand as it lay upon the blanket, its cold rigidity froze me with horror. I dropped it and looking at the kindly face, that would never more cheer us, I fell upon my knees by the bed, and wept in heart-broken sorrow.—

Poor Margaret! My tears were unselfish; at that moment I thought not of what we had lost, I wept for her from the truest affection. It was some minutes before I thought to look for Estelle; she was standing on the other side hiding her face in her shawl. I called her, and when she came to me I pulled the shawl gently away, and saw that her face was blanched to an ashy paleness, and covered with tears. We were so absorbed by grief that we did not think to ask how this thing happened. Presently the woman with whom Margaret had shared the house came to us and said,

"Poor Margaret, it's a dreadful sudden thing. It was 'bout the turn o' the night that she woke me up gaspin' an' tryin to get her breath, like. I called out, an' asked what was the matter, but she didn't make me any answer, and I got up and struck a light, 'an then I saw 'er sittin up in bed, rollin her eyes, 'an tryin to breathe, and presently she fell back, 'an did'nt move no more. The doctors seen 'er this mornin, and says she broke a blood vessel, an' bled inside, an' that suffocated her."

I wept afresh as she spoke.

"Will you come to the buryin'; it'll be this afternoon, I suppose,"

"No, we cannot," I answered, sadly, "our father is ill and we cannot leave him."

And then reminded how ill he was, I whispered to Estelle that we must go. Mourfully we bent down and kissed, for the last time, poor Margaret's cold cheek, then sobbing convulsively, we quitted the house, and turned towards our wretched home. I was quite overcome, and nearly fainting when we reached the house, and sank down on a seat. When we entered my father's room, seeing our pale and tear-stained faces, he started up in bed and cried:

"What has happened ? What is the matter ?"

"Oh, papa !" answered Estelle, "poor Margaret is dead."
My father fell back upon his pillow.

"Dead ! dead !" he cried, "our last and only friend, and I so ill. Oh, my God !"

The intelligence seemed to have a stunning effect on him, for he lay quite silent after this ; indeed, I think he was so ill that the power of thought was deserting him.

It may have been an hour, it may have been two, that we all remained perfectly silent. Estelle seated at the foot of the bed, leaned her head upon it and continued to weep silently. My father lay with his eyes closed, and, I hoped, sleeping. As to myself, I tried with all my might to suppress my tears, and summon all the strength and courage I possessed to consider what I should do for my father. I had heard the people speaking of the village doctor, that morning, but I knew not where he lived, and doubted much whether he would come to see beings so utterly deserted as we were. However, I resolved to try ; I went softly to Estelle and told her I was going to find the doctor, and ask him to come and see our father ; and if he awoke to tell him where I had gone. She said, through her tears, that she would, and glancing at the bed, as I was going out, I saw that my father's eyes were open, and gazing past me with a strange far-off expression ; in a moment he murmured softly, with a smile,

"Bella ! Bella !"

Bella, it was my mother's name ; how strangely it sounded to hear him call one who had been resting beneath the turf so many years. I stopped, very much frightened, and said :

"What is it papa ? Do you want anything ?"

He did not hear me, still he repeated :

"Come Bella, here—no—no—not there."

Estelle drew near me and clasped my hand :

"What ails papa, Irene?" Don't go, I am afraid," she said.

"He is very sick, and wandering in his mind, Estelle. I must go for the doctor, stay and take care of him till I come back, for he must not be left alone. I will be back very soon."

She obeyed me and resumed her seat by the bed, though she was pale with alarm, and I hurried away. I went down the hill into the road, and stopped a minute to reflect how I should find the doctor. Presently I saw a laboring man coming toward me. I went up to him and asked him if he could direct me to the house of the village doctor.

"His name is doctor Miller," he replied, "'an he lives 'bout three quarters of a mile, straight down the road, in a little brown stone house."

I thanked him, and set off. My feet buried themselves in the snow as I walked, and the light shawl I wore was not sufficient to keep out the piercing cold. I felt sick with anxiety and grief. But they added speed to my footsteps. In a few minutes I reached the house the man had described to me. I went in the little gate, ran up the steps, and getting on tiptoe to reach the rafter, knocked. A respectable, neat looking girl opened the door.

"Does doctor Miller live here?" I asked.

"Yes," she answered, "come in."

I entered, and she closed the door; then pointing to one on the right side, she said,

"The doctor is in there; that's his office, you can go in."

She unclosed the door, and I walked timidly in. What a pleasant cheerful room it was with its bright coal fire, warm carpet and curtains; its book cases and pictures; and large center table, covered with books and papers, on which a gentleman, seated in a large arm chair, was writing.

He raised his head, and seeing me, laid down his pen.

"Well, my child," he said, "you want me; come to the fire, it is cold."

My heart was beating so fast that my voice trembled very much, as I answered,

"My father is sick, sir, very sick indeed, and I have come to ask you to go and see him; I shall be so much obliged to you, sir, if you will."

Something earnest and entreating in my tone must have struck him, for he extended his hand to me and said,

"Come here, my child. Who is your father, it seems to me I have seen you before?"

I went to him, he held my hand gently, and looked at me. His kind, handsome young face and sweet voice assured me.

"My father is Mr. Stuart, sir," I replied; "he is very sick, he has a fever, and is wandering in his mind; there is no one with him but my little sister and I must hurry back. I should be so glad, sir, if you would go with me."

"Mr. Stuart," he said; "oh, that is the gentleman who kept the village school last term."

I did not wish to weep, my pride was humiliated, at the thought of this stranger seeing my tears, but vain were my efforts to choke them back. I was silent and they rolled slowly over my cheeks.

"No—no you must not do that," he said, taking his handkerchief from his pocket and wiping his eyes.

"I will go right away with you and see your father; you are imagining that he is very ill, I know, but we will have him all right in a little while. Sit down by the fire and warm your feet and hands, while I put on my great coat, and then we will start."

My heart was immeasurably lightened. I sat down in the chair he placed for me, feeling sure that my father was

saved. He was ready very soon and then he led me by the hand out of the house. As we walked along he asked me my name and how old I was, and then my sister's name and age; and then he commenced to ask another question, and suddenly checked himself; and we walked the rest of the way in silence. I preceded him into the house; at the door of my father's room Estelle met me.

"Oh, Irene," she said, "has the doctor come?" Then perceiving him she stepped back, and continued in a low voice,

"I have been so frightened; he has been talking so wildly. I am so glad you have brought the doctor."

My father was lying on his back, his eyes shining with a wild lurid light, were so widely opened that the lids seemed to be strained back. The doctor went to the bedside and took my father's pulse between his fingers. After examining it for some moments he said,

"Mr. Stuart, do you know who I am, sir?"

My father made no reply for several minutes; then disturbedly moving his hands over the bed clothes, he said,

"The doors are all locked, I cannot get out."

"His fever is very high, it has taken away his senses," said the doctor, whose face, perhaps unconsciously to himself, had become very grave. Then he turned and went into the other room, beckoning us to follow him.

"My children," he said, closing the door, and leaning against it, "your father needs careful attention, his system is in a state of great inflammation. I would send you my servant to watch with him to-night, but my wife is ill, and needs her. Is there not some woman in the village you could get to come in occasionally, and help take care of him?"

"No one—no one, sir," I answered. "We had a dear friend, poor Margaret, but she is dead—she died this morning. How strange and dreary the words sounded, as I said then.

"Oh!" said the doctor, quickly, "poor Margaret; how thoughtless I am, they told me something of it this morning. Well, Irene, what will you do?"

"Oh, sir," I said, "I can take care of my father. No one in the world will do so much for him as Estelle and I, because no one loves him as we do."

There was trouble, and compassionate sympathy in the doctor's kindly eyes. He drew a chair to the table, sat down, and taking from his pocket a small case of medicines, he took from it some powders and gave them to me, saying, they were to be given every two hours until I went to bed, and as soon as I arose in the morning; after telling us we must not fret, that our father would soon be well, and that he would come to see him early in the morning, he then took his leave.

I went to my father, and with great difficulty persuaded him to take one of the powders; then remembering what, in my grief and anxiety I had forgotten, that neither Estelle or myself had tasted food the whole day, I went to the closet and found there a loaf of bread, the last remnant of poor Margaret's generosity. We satisfied our hunger with it and then returned to our post by the bedside. I sat down on the trunk at the head of the bed, and she on the floor at my feet, with her head in my lap, and so we remained, clinging to each other by the side of our forsaken, delirious father, till night closed in upon us, I asking myself what we were to do for food and fire to keep us from starving and freezing.

It was quite dark when I heard a knock at the outer door. I arose and went to answer it in great surprise. I had no light, but I could perceive that it was a boy, carrying on each arm a basket.

"What do you wish?" I said, timidly, holding the door half open.

"I come from doctor Miller's, with some things for you," was his reply.

"Come in," I said, wondering what the doctor could have sent us.

He entered and set down his basket.

"You have no light," he said; "here is a candle and a match, I will light it."

He found the wall, struck the match and lighted the candle; then handing it to me he said,

'The doctor just told me to say, that he sends these things for your use, and that he will be here early in the morning.'

Before I had time to reply he went quickly out and closed the door; Estelle was on her knees, examining the contents of the baskets. One contained wood, the other contained provisions.

"How good and generous the doctor is," I said, and yet never had I felt more sad. I was humiliated. Ah! I thought, my father's words are fulfilled, we are, indeed, beggars.

Estelle, with the sympathy of a kindred mind, shared my thoughts.

"I do not like charity, Irene," she said; "it did not seem like begging to take from Margaret, because she was not above us, but I suppose we ought to be very glad and thankful for this."

We sat up till midnight. I counted the hours by the striking of the village clock, and gave my father his medicine regularly; then, quite exhausted, we went to bed and fell asleep in each other's arms.

CHAPTER XI.

EARLY the next morning the doctor came. There was no change in my father, except that his fever was more intense. The doctor substituted some liquid medicine for the powders, to be given with the same interval of time. I thanked him for his kindness very warmly, feeling how much we owed him. He answered me with benevolence and delicacy:

"My child, I will do for both of you all that I can. Your father is a gentleman; I wish I had known him earlier, I would have done all in my power to have assisted him.

I need not say how earnestly I thanked him now. As he was going away he told me he would come again that evening, then added,

"Are you not lonely here, my little ones, all alone with your sick father?"

"Sometimes," answered Estelle, "but we are together."

"Ah, this is a sad world," I heard the doctor murmur as he departed.

Days passed—days of sad, aching anxiety. My father never had his senses for a moment. Sometimes he raved of scenes long passed, and beings gone forever from the earth; sometimes he lay in a dull heavy torpor, devoured by the burning fever. Often sitting with him in the profound silence and solitude of night my heart misgave me in spite of the doctor's assurances that all would be well. The good doctor made us perfectly comfortable, as far as

our physical wants were concerned, but he could not rid me of the weight that lay so heavy on my heart that it seemed impossible for me to breathe freely. I think it was the tenth day of my father's illness. In the afternoon the doctor came as usual. After feeling my father's pulse for a long time he told me cheerfully that the fever was leaving him, and that he thought the disease had taken a favorable turn.

"My little Irene," he said, "I shall want you to sit up the best part of to night, to give him some medicine I shall leave with you. Can you do it?"

"Oh, yes indeed," I answered, eagerly. "Is he really better, doctor?"

"I think so, my child; now be a dear patient nurse a little while longer."

He gave me the medicine, told me he would come very early in the morning, and bade us a kind good night.

It was soon dark. I lighted a candle and placed it on a little table in my father's room, and the medicine beside it; then, in order to observe our father's movements, we seated ourselves on a chair at the foot of the bed; for the doctor had told me not to rouse him to give him his medicine, but to wait till he woke. Hours passed wearily away; the village clock struck twelve, still he lay motionless. Wearied out with watching, Estelle laid softly down on the foot of the bed, and in a few minutes her gentle breathing told me that she slept. It was very cold; I looked around and found a shawl, and covered her. The wind went round the house with a long moaning cry, and entering at every crack and corner, made the flame of the candle flicker, and the fantastic shadows move. For another hour I sat in dead silence; broken only by my father's irregular breathing—now loud and rattling, then almost inaudible. I was so filled with a strange terror at this silence and solitude that I did

not feel inclined to sleep. I found myself chilling with fear, as I gazed into the dark corners of the room, and listened to the moaning wind. Wishing to shake off the vague horror that possessed me, I took the light and went to look at my father. The flush of fever had faded and left his face as colorless as marble. I laid my hand lightly on his forehead, it was damp and cold, and his parted lips, and the flesh around them, wore a strange blueish shade. His eyes were closed, and his respiration labored and rattling. I felt a sudden and violent pain in my heart, a physical pain, and went hurriedly back to my seat, repeating to myself what the doctor had said, but I could not re-assure myself. Trembling and with my heart beating fearfully, I laid my head among the bed clothes, and in a few minutes, in spite of the anguished thoughts that tormented me, my exhausted nature gave way, and I fell asleep. I know not how long I lay there, but I was suddenly aroused by some one calling:

“Irene! Irene!”

I started up, and to my great astonishment, beheld my father sitting up in bed. His eyes were longing and restless, but no longer wild; his face was white as death, and the blue shadow had spread and deepened, and rested now on all the lower part of his face. Every nerve and fiber of his body quivered as though he had been galvanized.

Seeing him thus, and hearing him call my name for the first time in so many days had such an effect upon me that I chilled from head to foot, and began to weep violently as I went toward him.

“My child! My child!” he said in a hoarse and broken voice, and clasped me in his trembling arms.

Thank God, I thought, he has recovered his senses, and he knows me. In a moment he cried, with great excitement of manner:

"Quick ! quick ! wake Estelle.

I called her loudly, she sprang up, and seeing me encircled by one of my father's arms, and the other extended towards her she threw herself into it, and we were both pressed fervently to his heart.

"Oh, my children ! my children ! I am dying—I am going to leave you all alone in the world," he cried in a voice of sharp agony, with his face convulsed with emotion.

"Oh, don't—don't say so " I said with streaming tears, and clinging to him, "you are better—you will get well—you will not die and leave us all alone."

"What will become of them ? What will be their fate ? Oh, God ! Almighty God ! have mercy and protect them. Oh ! my poor children I have not done my duty to you."

"Do you feel worse, papa ? Let me go for the doctor. Oh, dear ! oh, dear ! what shall I do," I cried, bursting into uncontrollable sobs and cries.

My father groaned heavily. He seemed to suffer the most intense pain, mental and bodily. His features changed frightfully, the pallor increased, and the dull shadows crept all over his face—that shadow seen only on the face of the dying, cast by the wing of the angel of death. His nerveless arm could no longer clasp us. In an almost inarticulate tone, and striving to fix his glance upon us, he said,

"Promise me to be always honorable and virtuous, no matter what happens. Promise me."

"Yes, yes," we answered, scarcely knowing what we said, kissing his cold hands, and bathing them with tears.

"Remember—remem—," he gasped, and then suddenly reeling, fell back on his pillow, his whole frame quivering for a moment, his eyes shut and opened, and then he lay perfectly still. I told myself he had only fainted. I leaped off the bed, rushed out of the house, and across the field to

a little house that stood there—knocked, shook the latch and screamed till it was opened.

“Come! come! I said laying hold of the person without knowing whether it was man or woman; “my father is dying.”

“Wait a minute, till I get a light and dress,” replied a woman’s voice.

“My father is dying!” I repeated, wildly, “I can’t wait. Come, come!

I fairly dragged her, by a portion of her dress I seized in the darkness. Thus confused she went with me.

“There, there!” I said as we entered the room. “Do something quick or he will die.”

I was in a kind of delirium. I stood perfectly silent, clenching my hands till the nails entered my flesh, watching her as she carried the light to the bed, and held it down close to the eyes that never moved in the least. Then I saw her hurry away and return with a little piece of mirror, which she put to the lips, and then held to the light, shaking her head as she saw there was not the slightest moisture upon it. Still I said to myself that it was not death, that it could not be that he had gone from us; that he would move presently. I watched as though I were but an indifferent spectator of the scene; the people coming in till the room was almost full, and they concealed the motionless form from me. I heard a hum of voices, and at last some one said:

“It’s no use, it’s all over, he’s quite dead.”

Then like a mad creature I forced my way through them, and sprang upon the bed, caressing the marble brow and cheeks, and the eyes, that strangers hands closed, with kisses, and striving to make the rigid arms embrace me.

“Oh, my father! my father!” I cried, “you are not dead, you have not left me, your child, your Irene. Speak to me! Speak to me! Oh! he will never speak to me any

more—he has gone forever. Oh, let me die too, bury me with him. I can't live all alone. Papa! papa! will you never answer me again? Will they take you away where I shall never see you again? No—no I will never go, I will never leave you.”

“Take her off, carry her away,” said a voice, and some one put their arms around me, and tried to lift me off the bed. I screamed and clung to the senseless form. They drew me forcibly away, my head whirled, and I lost my senses.

CHAPTER XII.

I was lying on my own bed, in the other room, when I came to myself. A woman was standing by me holding a glass of water. When I opened my eyes she began to console me in her rude way. I wept broken-heartedly as I listened. The door between the rooms opened and the doctor entered. At sight of him my grief overpowered me, and I buried my face in the bed clothes, unable to speak. He came and laid his hand gently on me ;

"Irene, look at me a moment." he said, but I was silent and did not move.

"Am I not your friend, Irene ? Won't you look at me a moment ?"

I could not resist this appeal, I raised my tear-dimmed eyes to his. His kind face was deeply sad.

"I don't want to talk to you now, Irene, because words are of no use in a case like this. I want you to drink this like a dear good child," and he held to my lips a glass containing some liquid. I drank and sank down again. The doctor signed to the women and they both quitted the room. I fell asleep almost immediately ; anguish and fatigue had completely exhausted me, and the opiate the doctor administered took effect at once. The sunlight was stealing into the room when I awoke. What a sick dreary feeling there was upon me. I sat up and tried to think what it was that made my heart sink and sicken. Oh, with what a sharp pang

recollection came back, as my eyes fell on the door leading into the other room. The house was perfectly quiet; where were all the people, the doctor and Estelle? I arose and went with faltering steps into the chamber of death. It was partially darkened; two women sat by the window talking very low. A sheet had been placed over the bed, but I could distinguish the outlines of the motionless form beneath. Seeing Estelle's golden head resting on the edge of the bed, I went and knelt beside her on the hard floor, and gently lifting her head, rested it on my shoulder. The poor child had wept till her tears were all dry. Pale cold and trembling she closed her eyes, and sighed convulsively. Neither spoke, but never can I describe how desolate I felt, as we knelt there beside our father's corpse. At last there was a step in the other room, the door opened, and the doctor entered. He came to us and said,

"My dear children, I want to take you home with me. Come, get up and try and compose yourselves a little. Try and have a little strength, Irene, for your sister's sake; see how pale and unnerved the poor child is."

"I cannot leave my father?" I said, sobbing bitterly.

"Leave your father, my dear child, your father is not here; he has already left you, there is nothing left but a senseless form; he has gone to a happier world, I trust. You must not grieve so, though I know," added he, as if involuntarily, "it is quite natural that they should feel so; poor unfortunate children." He was silent a moment, and then continued,

"Come, go home with me now."

I arose and said I was ready, in a bewildered way. The doctor took Estelle in his arms, for she seemed quite unable to walk, and I followed to the door; suddenly I said:

"Wait a moment," and stole quickly back to the bed-

side, and turned back the sheet from the unconscious face. How still—how beautiful in its marble-like serenity. His wanderings were over—he was at rest at last. I saw a pair of scissors hanging at the side of one of the women, and asked her to lend them to me. She did so, and I severed a long, thick lock of the beautiful raven hair, wrapped it in paper, and placed it in my bosom. I kissed for the last time the cold brow, and then reverently caressing it, I went quickly and joined the doctor who was waiting for me without. The cold air revived Estelle a little. The doctor asked her if she thought she could walk. She said, Yes. He put her on the ground, and taking one of her hands, and I the other, we went slowly away. My mind was so confused that it was impossible for me to think correctly; I found my bonnet on my head and my shawl around my shoulders, without knowing how they came there. Everything looked queer and dark to me.

When we reached the doctor's house he entered and conducted us into the office, and gave us seats by the fire. In a moment a pretty rosy young woman entered, and spoke to him in a low voice, then she came to me, bent down and kissed my cheek with a kind sympathetic look, and going to Estelle she said,

“This child is not well; she ought to go to bed.”

“They both need rest and quiet, Mary, and they had better go to bed a few hours,” said the doctor.

She told us to come with her, and led us up stairs, through a chamber which I supposed to be hers, from a little child playing on the rug before the fire, and an infant sleeping in a cradle, into a pretty little room, in which a fire had just been lighted. She sat down by it, and taking Estelle on her knee, removed her bonnet and shawl, and smoothed her disordered hair. Then she set her upon a chair for a moment,

and going to her room brought one of her own night-gowns, and, undressing Estelle, put it upon her, and laid her gently in the bed, covering her carefully. The wearied child closed her eyes, and sank to sleep in a few moments.

"Don't you wish to go to sleep, for a little while, Irene?" Mrs. Miller asked me, drawing me to her, and taking off my bonnet and shawl.

"No madam, I am not sleepy; I will sit by my sister, if you please."

She pushed an arm chair to the side of the bed, and I sat down in it. Bending affectionately over me she said:

"I must leave you now, my child, to attend to my domestic affairs. You will not cry any more, Irene?"

"No," I said, "I am not going to cry."

She went out and softly closed the door. I sat without motion or thought. Unconsciously, I found myself counting the chairs, and examining the pattern of the carpet and curtains. Time went very slowly. I listened to every sound, the crying children, the steps going to and fro in the halls, and now and then Mrs. Miller's voice. At last she came in to take me down to dinner. Estelle still slept soundly. Mrs. Miller said rest would be of more use to her than anything else, and she might have some dinner when she woke. So I went down alone. I had not tasted food that day. I ate some soup, feeling very strange, and out of place. Two pretty children, as rosy as their mother, sat beside me, one a boy, and the other a girl. After the meal was finished, Mrs. Miller took me up stairs again and insisted that I should remain in her room. She gave me a seat by the window, and went into the other room, to see if Estelle was still sleeping. In a little while she re-appeared with her, dressed and looking refreshed by her long sleep.

"You must go and get some dinner now," said Mrs. Miller, as Estelle made a move to come to me. "You may talk with your sister when you come up."

Estelle sighed and followed her with her habitual docility.

I heard and saw everything as if in a dream, and realized nothing.

Very soon they returned, and Estelle came and sat down on the same chair with me, and winding her arms around me, murmured softly,

"Irene, my dear sister."

It was the first time she had spoken to me for many hours. Her dear familiar voice seemed to restore to me the power of feeling. I laid my head upon her shoulder, and wept unobserved for some minutes, quiet tears that did me good. Mrs. Miller talked cheerfully to us, and tried to make us look at a book of pretty engravings, and endeavored in every way to divert our minds. She had never known a great sorrow; that was evident from her happy face. It is impossible, entirely, to comprehend or sympathize with what we have never felt, and kind and gentle as she was, she needed the experience of a deep grief to draw her close to us. In a few minutes she produced a piece of dark calico, cut out two dresses, and fitted them on us, and then began to sew rapidly, occasionally stopping a moment to play with the baby lying in the cradle beside her, or to speak to the little ones when they became too noisy. When it grew dark she laid aside her sewing, and we went down to tea. As I only drank a little tea I was very soon finished. The doctor looked sad, and ate in silence. When he rose from the table he said to me,

"Come to the office a moment, Irene, I want to speak to you."

I followed him.

"I have made arrangements, Irene," he said, "that your—"

poor father be buried to-morrow, at two o'clock. I think, my dear child, that you and your sister had better not attend the funeral. It can do no good, and will only revive your violent grief."

"Oh! doctor!" I answered, the tears instantly rolling down my cheeks, "do you think we will not follow our poor father to his grave?"

"Do not cry, my dear child, do as you please," said the doctor, much moved. "I spoke only for the best; not for the world would I do or say anything to occasion you any more grief. You shall go with me, to-morrow, and now good-night, Irene."

I loved him for his kindness, and because he was associated with the past. I took his hand and kissed it. He bent and kissed me with tears in his eyes.

"God bless your grateful, sensitive heart," he said; "good night."

I went up stairs, and asked Mrs. Miller to let us go to bed. She consented, and Estelle and I hastily undressed and went to rest beside each other.

With a heart inexpressibly lone and desolate, I wound my arms around her, the only being left me on earth to love me, or for me to love, and fell asleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE next day, by noon, Mrs. Miller had finished our dresses. She provided each of us with a little cloak of black cloth, and a black straw bonnet, trimmed with crape.

We dressed ourselves in these sad garments, and started with the doctor for the house that had been our poor home. The door was open, and a man standing in it, when we arrived. He stepped back and we entered; the first thing that struck my eyes was a bier standing in the centre of the room, with a coffin resting upon it, the lid laid over it, but not yet nailed down. What an awful dreariness pervaded the dark cold room. Involuntarily Estelle and I drew near the door. Several rough looking men were in the room. One of them said something to the doctor, who shook his head and said, "No," then he went to the coffin, adjusted the lid, and began to nail it down. When this was done the doctor took a prayer book from his pocket, and going to the foot of the bier, he began to read the solemn, impressive, funeral service of the church of England. I listened very intently but it did not console me. The gloom seemed to gather more darkly. He read in a slow melancholy tone, and several times his voice faltered. He concluded, and replaced the prayer book in his pocket. Four of the men raised the bier, and brushing me as they went out, moved slowly off. We followed.

It was toward the end of February. The snow still lay on the ground, but the air was mild, and the sun warm. We walked on, and on, in silence. I saw men at work in the fields, and children laughing and playing before their homes. I wondered how any one could be happy when our hearts were so sad. I could not imagine that I should ever be gay again. We reached the grave yard at last. We entered, and the men set down the bier by the side of a newly dug grave. Then they lifted the coffin to the ground, and arranging some ropes around it, began to lower it into the grave. I leaned over and watched its descent with such horror, with such a torn and dying feeling, that when it touched the bottom, and they drew up the ropes, and I heard the first shovelfull of earth fall upon it, I fell upon my knees and groaned bitterly. It was the seal of our entire separation; nothing—nothing of the past remained to us, save recollections. The grave was filled up, and the doctor gently raising me whispered, "we must go."

"One moment," I said. "How shall we ever find our father's grave again?"

"That is easy enough," answered one of the men, "don't you see the mark on the fence—'No. 27.' It's lucky you've got one by the fence. If it had been in the middle you never could have found it."

"No, 27."—It was the only sign to distinguish the artist's grave.

CHAPTER XIV.

Children are not generally tenacious of melancholy impressions. Their grief, however violent, does not usually last long. But our lives had been so different to those of other children, our thoughts and affections had been so centered on one object that when we lost him it seemed that we lost all. Time calmed the violence of our feeling, but even at this distant day, the memory of my father is full of sadness.

A fortnight elapsed in the good doctor's home. At first, after calmness and reason had returned to me a little, I asked myself, what was to become of us. But finding that neither the doctor nor his wife spoke to me upon the subject, and continued to treat us with the greatest kindness and affection, I began to believe they intended to adopt us. The idea made me feel very contented. Estelle and I loved the noble-hearted doctor, and his pretty, gentle wife, and the dear little children. Every day we wandered to our father's grave, and by degrees our passionate sorrow became a gentle sadness. We came to lift our eyes from the grave, where his ashes reposed, and think of him as living in a brighter, more blessed land. No one questioned us of the past; they forbore to revive painful reminiscences. One day the doctor sent for Estelle and I to come to the office. We went down; the doctor was seated in his arm-chair, his face

was a little disturbed and anxious. He told us to sit down, and after a moment's thought he said,

"I am going to tell you something very serious and important. I know that both of you are intelligent, and will understand me. Mrs. Miller and I love you very much ; if we had the means to provide for and educate you we would never let you go from us, but we have our own little ones to take care of, and we are poor."

He paused a moment, and we, commencing to feel very sad and anxious, remained silent, and he continued.

"If I had not been able to provide for you, in a way, that you might receive excellent educations and kind treatment, I should have kept you with me, and done the best I could ; but thank heaven, I have succeeded in having you provided for more advantageously than is in my power to do for you."

He paused again. I looked earnestly at him, mechanically playing with Estelle's bright curls.

"A lady of rank and fortune," he went on, "has a country house about ten miles from here ; by a lucky chance she happened to come down from London the other day, to superintend some repairs, arrangements, etc. She became indisposed and sent for me. I happened to mention you to her, and she told me that she and some other charitable ladies in London subscribed a yearly sum to a school, about five hundred miles from here, for the purpose of educating poor girls. Then she offered to send you to this institution, and let you receive the very best educations, and when you should be fitted, should you live, to obtain for you situations as governesses, and thus you would be able to maintain yourselves. This is a rare chance indeed, much better than I can ever offer you, my dear children."

I knew that he was right to think first of his own children ;

that we had no right to expect him to consider us, to their disadvantage. Still I could not help feeling sad ; but knowing it was our duty to accede to whatever he proposed, I said nothing, and gently pressed Estelle's arm to indicate silence.

"I know," resumed the doctor, "that you will feel lost and lonely at first, but very often children born to wealth leave their homes for years, to go to school. Lady Russell, the lady who will take charge of your future fate, is a kind, benevolent lady, and will be sure to see that you are comfortable. Do not believe that we are glad to see you go ; you cannot imagine how much I regret that circumstances force me to part with you. Lady Russell wishes to return to town as soon as possible, She has sent to inform the preceptress of the school that two new pupils under her patronage, will arrive shortly. She is only waiting now to see you, and send you to the school. She proposed to send her carriage for you to-morrow morning, do you think you can be ready ?"

"Oh, yes, certainly," we replied together.

"Well then, my dear children, you may go and ask my wife what you need prepare."

We went up stairs hand in hand, found Mrs. Miller and repeated to her what the doctor had told us. She knew it already, of course, and immediately commenced telling us how happy she had been when she went to school. Then she packed the scant clothing we possessed in a trunk, telling us that she had not been able to provide all the clothing we needed for school, but Lady Russell would attend to the rest. She talked gaily to us all day, and said she would speak to the doctor about having us pass the vacations with them. This encouraged us very much, and we went to bed quite cheerful. The next morning, at ten o'clock, we had our cloaks and bonnets on, all ready to start, but greatly

to every body's surprise the carriage did not come. The doctor mounted his horse, and rode to Russell Park, to see what was the matter. When he returned he said that Lady Russel was obliged to take the carriage to pay a visit, but it would come for us at five in the evening. We were restless, and the hours passed uneasily. A few minutes before the appointed time we went up stairs to get ready again. We had just finished our arrangements, when Mrs. Miller came flying up stairs, and said the carriage was at the door. We hastened down. It was an elegant carriage, with coat of arms on the pannels, and a pair of beautiful grey horses. The little children followed to the gate and lisped good-bye. The doctor kissed us with a very sad face, as he lifted us into the carriage, and murmured fervently,

"God bless you."

Mrs. Miller clasped us in her arms, with her flushed cheeks wet with tears. The door was shut and the coachman gathered up his reins, and we rolled away. We leaned out of the window and waved our hands, trying to smile till the kind ingenuous faces, and the modest house disappeared. We were fairly alone in the wide world.

CHAPTER XV.

WE were in a state of nervous dread all the way. The idea of a great lady was very formidable. We sat silent, close together, and the carriage drove on for about two hours, I should think, for it was pitch dark when it stopped. I saw lights gleaming through the trees. The coachman dismounted, opened the door and lifted us out; then unclosing a large iron gate, he led us up a long avenue, bordered with trees, at the end of which rose Russell Park. It was a large granite building, and very imposing it looked to our young eyes. We ascended the steps and the coachman rang a bell. It was answered by the porter.

"You'll just give these children to the housekeeper," the coachman said, passing us in the door. The porter closed it, and pulled a bell-rope, hanging on the wall. It was a very broad hall, lighted by a lamp representing flowers, and adorned with pictures. In a moment a door at the end of the hall opened, and a neatly dressed, elderly woman appeared.

"You are to take care of these children, Mrs. Glover, till my lady wishes to see them," the porter said to her.

"Very well," she replied, "come with me, children."

We followed through another smaller hall, into a comfortable room, where a bright fire was burning. In the center a table was set for tea. She spoke very kindly to us, took off our bonnets and cloaks, and told us to sit up and

drink some tea. We obeyed, feeling so strange and shy that we hardly dared to look up. After this Mrs. Glover gave us seats by the fire, and several servants came into the room, and she talked to them, giving them directions about something; I fell into a reverie, my thoughts wandered back, and I became so abstracted that I did not know what was passing around me, till some one laid their hand on my shoulder, and said,

"My child, Lady Russell has sent for you."

I started, and saw Lady Russell's maid standing before me. I arose with a fluttering heart, and walked with Estelle after her. She led us through the great hall, up a broad flight of stairs, and suddenly throwing open a door we found ourselves in a large drawing room. I was so transfixed with wonder that for a moment I forgot my confusion. The brilliant light, the glowing carpet and hangings, the pictures and flowers, and the sweet odor of the apartment; all seemed like enchantment to me. I forgot where I was till a touch from the maid recalled me to myself.

"Come," she said, "don't you see? What is the matter?"

I looked and saw a lady sitting in an arm chair, at the farther end of the room. I followed the maid to her, I saw in one rapid glance that she was about forty, tall and stout. She was fine looking, but I did not like her face, it was not unkind, but hard and unsympathetic. I instinctively felt I could expect no tenderness from her. She was plainly dressed in black silk, and wore a head-dress of lace and flowers.

"What are your names, and how old are you?" she asked, in rather a sweet voice.

We told her, and then she said.

"Can you read and write?"

"Oh, yes," we answered very quickly. She observed us

attentively for a few moments, and then, turning her head, she said,

"What do you think of them, Sir Grey?" My eyes followed hers, and I saw, with surprise, that I had not noticed that there was a gentleman in the room. He was sitting on a lounge in the recess of the window, and somewhat in the shadow of the heavy curtain. He leaned forward, and replied to Lady Russell,

"Excuse me, your ladyship, I cannot see them well from this distance."

"Go to that gentleman," she said. We went timidly. He was a man advanced in life, with a benevolent but not very intelligent face. He patted us kindly on the head, and turning our faces toward the light, he said,

"Why, upon my word, they are pretty children. And these are your ladyship's little proteges. I hope they will be good little girls, worthy of your ladyship's patronage."

"I hope they will. You are eleven, you say, Irene, and your sister ten; by the time you are eighteen, and your sister seventeen, I hope you will be fitted to accept situations as governesses. You must remember that you are dependent, and this ought to be another motive for exertion, to make yourselves respectable and comfortable, which you may do if you please. You will be very happy where you are going, if you behave well."

"Oh, they will do that, I am sure," said the gentleman, "having such a generous protectress. Your ladyship merits the thanks and prayers of many orphans."

"It is true, Sir Grey, I am always striving to do them some real, permanent service," answered her ladyship, who seemed pleased at this compliment.

"Now I hope you will remember what I said to you. You will leave for school early in the morning, and now,

Louise," she added to the maid, "you may take them away, and have them put to bed."

Louise conducted us back to the housekeeper, who put us to bed in a cot in her own room, and, very much wearied, we soon slept.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was yet dark when we were aroused, and told that the stage was waiting for us, in the road. We got up and dressed ourselves quickly. Then Mrs. Glover took us into the hall, and told the porter to take us to the stage, then putting a letter in my hand, she said,

"Give that to the preceptress when you get there."

The porter took our hands and hurried down the avenue, and out of the gate, and put us into the stage.

"Halloo," he shouted to the driver, "remember, will ye, that these children are to be left at Harley Institute. They're all alone, ye see ; ye'll be sure and remember?"

"All right," answered the driver, and the coach rumbled off.

It was the early dawn of day—that hour so inexpressibly melancholy, when the first grey light steals into the sky. We were cold and lonely, and half asleep, leaning our heads against the coach, and, in spite of the jolting, we returned to our slumbers. When it became light I saw several people in the stage, but took no notice of them. We traveled two days and nights, only stopping to take meals, before reaching our destination. Toward the end of the second day we whirled through a little village, and stopped at a large house on the outskirts. The driver sprang off, opened the door, and cried out,

"Here ye are, little ones," then lifting us out went to the door, and rang the bell loudly, then returning, unstrapped our trunk, and set it on the ground, and mounting his box, the coach was gone before the door was opened. It was unclosed by a servant girl, who seemed to expect us. She told us to come up stairs, and ran on before. At the first landing a woman put her head out of a door and said,

"Take them into my room, Ann, I will be up in a minute."

The girl took us up another flight of stairs, into a decently furnished bedroom; the whole house had the same dreary, cheerless appearance. There was a little fire in the grate, and we gladly drew around it, chilled with the cold, and feeling much fatigued.

"Now, stay here, and Mrs. Butler 'll come to you in a little while," said the girl, and she then left us alone.

It was a quarter of an hour before Mrs. Butler made her appearance. She was perhaps fifty, though she wore no cap, and her hair was not grey. She was a large person, dressed in black, and though her manner was rather forbiddingly staid and precise, she had a benevolent face and kind voice. I gave her the letter the house-keeper had given me. She read it and then put it in her pocket, and said,

"If you are very tired with your journey, children, you need not enter the school to-day."

I felt wearied, but I thought it would be more amusing to go into the school, than to sit there, doing nothing all day. I asked Estelle what she wished, and finding she agreed with me, I told Mrs. Butler we would go into the school, if she pleased.

"Well, then," she said in her slow and grave tone, "you may take off your things, and I will come back for you in

a few moments. There is water, and a comb and brush, arrange your dress a little while I am gone.

She went away, and we removed our bonnets and cloaks, shook the dust from our dresses, and washed it from our faces and hands. Then I brushed Estelle's hair, and my own, this was easily done, for we wore it short, and it curled naturally. Mrs. Butler returned very soon, and led us down stairs, into the school room, where there was the most deafening noise, and the greatest confusion. Some of the girls were walking up and down, talking, others romping and laughing, playing at games and hallooing. A few sat quietly at their desks, reading or sewing. Mrs. Butler picked up a ruler, and striking a desk, cried,

"Silence, girls, silence. What a noise."

Her voice restored order almost in an instant. The girls became quiet, and looked toward us.

"Come here Marianne," she said, beckoning to one of them, who came to her,

"Here are two new pupils, I want to put them under your charge, to learn the rules of the school. Their desks are number twenty-nine and thirty."

The young girl was about sixteen, tall, and had rather a superfluity of flesh, and a merry mischief-loving face. She replied to our timid glances by a good-natured smile, and asked if we would walk about with her, or go to our seats. We felt too strange and shy to move, and told her we preferred the latter. The eyes of all the girls bent on us as Marianne guided us to our desks, and made me feel very uncomfortable. Marianne's seat was next to mine; she showed me her books, and explained some of the rules, till a small bell rang, and then she said,

"Hush, now, recreation is over; we must not talk any more;" and she began to study, apparently with great earn-

estness. Presently a tall thin woman came in, and took a seat behind an elevated desk, at the upper end of the room. I had never been in any but my father's school room, but I supposed this was the teacher. I asked Marianne,

"Yes, that's the teacher, Miss Greene. She is good, though very strict. I am very glad I am in this room, the other teachers are so cross. They teach the big girls. I suppose I ought to be there, but it is so hard to study. Do you like to study?"

"I like to read," I said.

"Oh, how strange; I can't bear reading. I do love fun. Do you like to play, Estelle?"

"Sometimes, but I would rather read."

"What funny girls!"

"Miss Murry if you do not stop talking you will be marked disorderly," said Miss Greene.

"Oh dear, I forgot!" said Marianne, and she returned to her book.

There was about sixty girls in the room, generally near Estelle's age and mine; there was only three or four as large as Marianne. After a few minutes spent in these observations, Marianne took two books from her desk, and gave one to me, and one to Estelle. I opened mine and found it a reader, very soon its contents entirely absorbed me, and I read until school was out. When I looked up the girls were leaving the room.

"Come," said Marianne, jumping up, "don't you want to go and see the dormitory?"

I did not know what she meant. I asked her what it was, and she explained as she went dancing and laughing along. Our dormitory was in the last story of the house. It was a long uncarpeted hall; all along the wall were ranged little beds, surrounded by curtains. Marianne told

me that they went to bed and rose very early, that the rule was, that no one must talk after they came in to go to bed, but that they did it for all that, and had a great deal of fun. A great bell rang while she was talking, and telling us that was tea, she ran capering down stairs. Midway we met a woman with a sour face, and disagreeable manner. She stopped, and said in a severe tone,

"Oblige me, Miss Murry, by walking; you keep the house in a continual confusion. You are not fit to take care of yourself, much less of others."

Poor teachers, their lives of drudgery and monotony rendered them unable to comprehend the vivacious spirit of happy youth. Marianne made no reply, and the teacher passed on. We slowly descended to the dining room. It was a long dark room, a table extending almost from one end to the other was entirely filled with girls of all ages. Our tea consisted of bread and bad butter, and something called tea. However, we had not, of late years been accustomed to very luxurious fare, and did not find this as unpalatable as some of the others. Every one ate rapidly and the meal was soon over, then we returned with Marianne to the school room. Miss Greene produced some books from her desk and gave them to us after marking our lessons for the morrow, and till nine o'clock we studied diligently. Then we marched in procession to the dormitory and each girl disappeared behind her curtains, and in ten minutes the light was extinguished. Estelle slept next to me. I stole to her bed for one instant, to kiss her good night, and then went softly back to bed. I was falling into a dose when my curtains were undrawn, and Marianne's voice said,

"Don't be frightened, I want to talk to you awhile."

"But Miss Greene!"

"Oh, never mind her, she is sound asleep by this time,"

and, seating herself on the edge of my bed, she entered into a long account of her parents and friends which became more and more unintelligible to me, until I no longer heard a word.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE next day Miss Greene examined us, and placed us in the class for which we were fitted. She told us we were to learn English, French, Italian and music; with this fine education, she said we would be able to become governesses in the highest families. She added that she trusted we would improve the opportunities afforded us, and become good scholars. We commenced our studies with great earnestness, and were soon favorites with our teachers. We had not so much to draw our attention from our books as others. Young as we were our experience rendered us unsociable. We, with our memories of solitude, privations and grief, could have nothing in common with the joyous, thoughtless beings whose light hearts had never comprehended sorrow, and to whom the future was unclouded as the past. Of the two hundred and fifty, or three hundred girls in the school, there were few that did not like us, and speak kindly to us, but we had no intimate friends among them. The only being I truly and fervently loved on earth was Estelle, and my affection for her was tender and anxious, as if I had been by many years her senior, and she in her looking up, clinging tenderness for me seemed to feel it so.

I shall pass over eight years that glided rapidly away in our monotonous school life. We formally graduated, and Mrs. Butler wrote to inform Lady Russell that we were ready to accept situations as governesses. We both played well on the harp and piano, and our fine voices had been culti-

vated as much as was possible at this school. We read and wrote French and Italian, and spoke them sufficiently to be understood. You cannot imagine me at nineteen from what I am now. I will describe myself justly, without vanity, as I should in speaking of another. I was tall, with a full, rounded and yet slender form, and my feet and hands were remarkably small. My face was oval, with a low broad brow, slightly prominent but regular features, and large eyes of a dark violet blue, possessing a peculiarly earnest and melancholy expression. My long thick hair was a warm brown. How shall I depict Estelle to you. What words can describe the grace and beauty of her form, or the spiritual loveliness of her face. She was a little below the medium height, but the cunningest fancy never bestowed on a sylph a figure more exquisitely moulded than hers. There was not a fault from the swelling throat to the fairy foot; and how beautiful was that sweet face, with its complexion like rosy alabaster, large, dark grey, tender eyes, and waving silk hair, light brown in the shade, but the brightest gold in the sun. The outline of her face was like mine, as were her teeth, white, and regular as pearls. There was a great dissimilarity in our natures; I united to a vivid imagination, a clear judgment, and great power of endurance. Estelle had the lightning-like rapidity of thought, and the quick sensibility that belongs to intellect; but the dreamy ideality of her mind was not tempered by reason; loving trusting and generous, she acted always from impulse. With a fragile constitution, and a temperament less re-active than mine, she had neither the stern energy that prompts great efforts, nor the stoical fortitude to support great sorrows. It was much from my knowledge of her character, as from my tender love for her, that I dreaded our approaching separation. I knew that I should be lonely and unhappy, but I

felt that I could bear it, but how could she, so dependent on her affections for happiness, endure the trials and humiliations of the position we were to assume. I saw, too, how the consciousness that we must soon part, oppressed and saddened her. I saw her beautiful face grow pale, and her step languid, and though I always strove to speak cheerfully, I could never call a smile to her lips. At length after an interval of some time, Mrs. Butler received a letter from Lady Russell informing her that she had been so fortunate as to obtain for us excellent positions, and that in a few days she would send her companion, Miss Hawthorne, to bring us to London, where she then was. With this sorrowful intelligence we made our preparations for departure, and awaited Miss Hawthorne's arrival, with very much the same feeling that condemned culprits await the day of execution.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ONE morning Estelle and I were alone in the music room. We had just finished singing a duet from *Somnambula*. Estelle's voice, a rich beautiful mezzo soprano, and mine a pure and flexible soprano, blended finely in this duet, in which she sang the part of Elvins, and I that of Amina. We were turning back the leaves of the music to re-commence it, when the door opened, and Mrs. Butler entered in a great flurry quite different to her usual calm manner.

"My dear girls," she said. "Miss Hawthorne has come. You are to travel to London in her ladyship's private carriage, in which she came. She wishes to go immediately, so come up stairs and get ready."

Estelle and I became grave in an instant, we arose and linked our arms in hers, and as we ascended the stairs, told her how very, very sorry we were to leave the school. And, indeed, we had passed there so many years of peace and contentment, if not happiness, that we could not fail to regret leaving it, for a future that promised nothing but loneliness. Mrs. Butler went with us to the clothes room, and assisted us to put on our mantles and bonnets, and then directed two of the servant girls to carry down our luggage. Left alone with us she took Estelle's hand and mine in hers, and said, with much feeling,

"I am sorry, indeed, to see you go. You will be alone, and unprotected, and you are very young and beautiful. Be good, and may God watch over you!"

We returned her affectionate embrace and descended with her. In the lower hall several girls, who had heard we were departing, came crowding around us. There is something melancholy in leaving even those we do not love, and I felt sad as I bade them good-by. Miss Hawthorne was in the little parlor. We went in and Mrs. Butler presented us to her. She was an ordinary looking woman, and had a distant cold manner, that made us ill at ease. She immediately took leave of Mrs. Butler, and said to us in a dictatorial tone,

"We will go now, young ladies," and preceded us to the carriage. Mrs. Butler followed to the steps, and again cordially shook our hands. Miss Hawthorne motioned us to take the front seat, and seated herself in stately grandeur on the back, and the carriage drove away.

CHAPTER XIX.

I asked Miss Hawthorne how far it was to London. She answered shortly that it was fifty miles. She did not condescend to speak to us again, and we, constrained by her presence, sat in silence. The description of any toady will serve for a portraiture of her. She acted towards her superiors in position with the most servile sycophancy, and treated inferiors with insulting superciliousness. I was busied with painful thoughts all the way. At sunset we began to enter London. As we drove through the busy streets I pressed Estelle's hand beneath the shadow of our mantles, and our eyes met. Ah! we remembered, we remembered our desolate wanderings. He who had shared them was at rest, but we were still pilgrims on the earth. The carriage rolled on to the west end of the city, and stopped before a splendid house. The coachman rang the bell, and when the door was opened we alighted and followed Miss Hawthorne into the hall and up a broad flight of stairs, into a small but elegantly furnished ante-room. She told us to be seated there for a few moments, and then left us.

"What a beautiful house this is, Irene," said Estelle, looking at the pictures and furniture with childish admiration.

"Yes," I answered bitterly, "some people are born to possess everything, and others nothing." And I fell again into melancholy thought. Alas! how poverty and dependence

humiliates a proud mind. I looked around this beautiful room, and remembered with shame, that we were dependents on Lady Russell's bounty. I glanced at the reflection of our forms in the long mirrors, and said to myself, that nature had been unjust, that we were more worthy of wealth and position than she. At such moments we cannot stop to reason, we only feel. The opening of a door interrupted these repining reflections. A person, whom I took to be a maid, from her smart dress and apish air, appeared, and asked us civilly, to please to follow her. She led us through several long halls into a pretty little bed-room, then she said,

"I will bring you a light in a moment, Miss. My Lady told me to tell you she would send for you in a quarter of an hour, as soon as she is dressed.

She went out, and returned with a light, and then left us. We laid off our things, and finding that our trunks had been brought into the room, we unlocked them, and took our brushes and combs to arrange our hair, more from the habit of neatness inculcated at school, than from vanity, for at that time I believe we had never thought whether our appearance could be of use to us or not. Estelle wore a plain high dress of blue merino, and a little white collar. It fitted well to her enchanting figure, and set off her transparent complexion and golden hair. Mine was of the same material but dark brown, and this color contrasted finely with my white skin and deep blue eyes. We conversed while dressing our hair. Estelle, sighing, wondered in what part of the country our situations were, and then she said with a bright smile,

"Oh, dear Irene, would it not be a happy thing if they should both be in London, then we could see each other so often. Oh! I would never complain of anything, if I could see you." I kissed her, and said I hoped so with all my

heart, and that we should soon know; and then the uncertainty made her sad again, and she said she was sure, from what she remembered of Lady Russell, that she had not much feeling. I gently chided her for saying so, though I agreed with her.

"You must remember, darling," I said, "that we are under great obligations to her. If she had not taken care of us what would have become of us?"

"Perhaps we might have remained with doctor Miller, and been much happier," she replied.

"We do not know that, and at any rate it does not alter the fact of our being indebted to Lady Russell. We must not let our pride, or even our feelings stifle our sense of justice, dear."

I was glad at that moment, to hear a knock at the door, for she had wound her arms, caressingly, around me, and was looking in my face so sadly, that, in spite of my efforts to be calm, and speak reasonably, I think the tears would have been in my eyes in another minute.

I said, "come in." It was the maid. "My lady is ready to see you now," she said.

We walked with her in silence, back to the principal corridor, and then, throwing open a door on the left, she introduced us into her ladyship's dressing room. The light from a chandelier fell on magnificent robes and shawls, thrown on lounges and ottomans, and on a large mirror, swinging in a frame, before which sat Lady Russell. She was attired for a ball or opera, in a dress of garnet-colored velvet, that left bare her finely formed, but rather too large, neck and arms. She wore a necklace and bracelets of diamonds, whose brilliancy dazzled me. It may have been the effect of dress, but she appeared to me younger and handsomer than when I had first seen her. She regarded us attentively as we approached, and looked surprised.

"Why really," she said, "you have so grown and improved I should never have been able to recognize you. Sit down there, on that ottoman. You may go, Annette."

We obeyed, and the maid quitted the room.

"Now," said her ladyship, "to speak of your business. Mrs. Butler wrote that you were good musicians, and had made excellent progress in the languages. You shall play and sing for me to-morrow, to-night I have little time, as I am going out. By the way," she added, abruptly, "have you dined?"

I told her we had not.

"Well," she said, "as soon as I am done talking to you a servant shall carry some dinner to your room. I have been exceedingly fortunate in securing good positions for you. To-morrow, Irene, I shall introduce you to the gentleman whose little daughter you are to take charge of. He is an Italian gentleman, Count Claudius de Giolamo, and resides at Florence. He is now on a visit to England, and desires to obtain an English governess for his daughter, a child of ten. The salary is good, seventy pounds a year, and your duties will be light. He returns to Florence day after to-morrow. You, Estelle, will stay in London; your situation is in the family of a very wealthy banker. He has three daughters to come under your tuition, but they are all young, the salary, the same as your sister's, is very liberal for an English governess."

I was so astonished and bewildered, that I could not answer. I had thought it hard to be separated from Estelle even by a few hundred miles, and it was proposed that I should go to a foreign land, place the sea between us, with an uncertainty of ever seeing her again.

"Oh! Madame, your ladyship," faltered Estelle, pale and agitated, "I cannot let my sister go to Italy, we

we never been parted in our lives. I entreat your ladyship to obtain her another situation, and let us remain together in the same country."

"Oh! I beg you to do so," I added, earnestly, "this act of kindness will add a thousand fold to what we already owe your ladyship."

Lady Russell looked astonished at our boldness.

"What nonsense you are talking," she said coldly. "Do you wish to sacrifice an excellent position for a whim? You do not know what is for your own interest, I will not hear of such folly."

Estelle burst into passionate tears, and hid her face in her hands.

"Oh! how can your ladyship call my love for my sister folly," she murmured. "You do not know what a sadly thing it is to lose the only thing one loves."

Carried away by my feelings, at seeing her tears, I drew her tenderly to me, and said, warmly,

"Do not fear, Estelle, I will never go so far from you, nothing shall induce me to."

The blood mounted to Lady Russell's face; in an angry, severe tone she said,

"Is this the respect and gratitude you learned at Harley House? Now listen to me. I am not in the habit of saying one thing and doing another, pay attention to what I say. Either you accept the positions I have taken the last year, and be able to provide for you, or to-morrow you leave this house, and seek homes for yourselves. I do not choose to yield to every sentimental fancy of silly girls. You ought to be perfectly happy, rescued from want as you have been. If you choose to act like rational beings it is well, all is arranged for your future welfare, otherwise take your own course. Retire to your room, and reflect before

you decide. To-morrow morning you will inform me of your determination."

She was as immovable as a rock. I felt that there was no tenderness or sympathy in her nature, to appeal to. I was quite overcome, and weeping now, myself. We arose and left her without a word, and found our way back to our own room. Estelle sank into a chair, and continued to weep bitterly, and I, kneeling beside her, reflected on Lady Russell's cruel threat of discarding us, if we refused to comply with her wishes. Abandoned by her, what could we do? Would not every one distrust and cast out two young girls, unknown, without money or friends. I shrank in terror from such an ordeal; harsh, and painful as was the alternative, we must submit. This conviction afflicted me so much that I wept with her for several minutes. At last she said,

"What shall we do, Irene? What can we do?"

"Nothing, dear Estelle," I answered, "but agree to Lady Russell's wishes. She is a cold, unfeeling woman, we can say nothing to move her, and thrown upon the world, now, without friends, we should be worse off than when we were children. No, dear, don't cry so; listen one minute, I have just thought of something cheering, let me tell you. I will go with this gentleman to Italy, and remain three or six months, I will be very economical and save all the money I can, then I will send an advertisement to an English paper, for a governessship in London, and then I shall have this gentleman to refer to, and be independent of Lady Russell. Doubtless I shall be able to obtain a situation here; I shall have money enough to pay traveling expenses. I will return, and we will never part again. Is not that a good plan, dear?"

She smiled faintly. "Ah! if I could believe it would ever happen," she said.

“What is there to prevent its happening? Come, let us be hopeful, and believe all will be well in the end.” The opening of the door caused me to look around. A servant entered bearing a tray, on which our dinner was placed in very nice order. She put it on the table, and left us. After a while I persuaded Estelle to go and eat something. We were really very hungry, for we had not tasted food since the morning. I could not help remarking to Estelle, how strange it was that Lady Russell should be so thoughtful of our physical wants, and give not the slightest attention to the requirements of the affections. There were doors opening and shutting, and the sound of gay voices, but we sat in loneliness speaking of the uncertain future, I repressing my own sorrow to console my loved Estelle. It was still early, when exhausted by the fatigue of our long drive, and so many agitating emotions, we undressed and went to rest. We had not yet lost the blessing of repose.

CHAPTER XX.

WE did not rise till late the next morning, At eleven Lady Russell's maid brought me a note, I opened it and read,

"I hope the morning finds you both wiser than you were last night. Write on the bottom of this page your determination, and send it back to me.
CLEMENTINE RUSSELL,"

I took a pencil from my pocket, and wrote, "We consent to your ladyship's wishes." and gave the note back to the maid.

Remembering that Lady Russell had said that she intended introducing me that morning, to the gentleman who had engaged me, I dressed myself in the best things I possessed, a dress of black silk, and arranged my hair in plain bands, as I had worn it at school. My face was pale and anxious, but when the maid came to tell me that Lady Russell wished to see me in the drawing-room, my cheeks became crimson, and exchanging a sad look with Estelle, I followed with faltering steps. The drawing-room was a large, magnificent apartment. Lady Russell, in a pretty morning dress, reclined in a fauteuil near one of the windows, beside her a gentleman was seated. More timid than a child, I advanced toward them, almost dropping with confusion. Her ladyship and the gentleman arose, and she said, more politely than she had ever before addressed me,

"Count Giolamo, Miss Irene Stuart."

The Count bowed to me with extreme elegance, I timidly returned it, and he resumed his seat.

"Sit down, child," said Lady Russell, relapsing into her former familiar and patronizing manner. I was glad to sink into a seat almost behind them, to conceal my blushes. They resumed their conversation, and presently I ventured to look at the Count over her ladyship's shoulder. He was, I judged, about forty-five or six years old, somewhat above the usual height, and his figure compensated in manliness and dignity, what it had lost of the undefinable grace of youth. His face was oval, slightly square at the chin, and the outline of his features classic. The calm brow of a harmonious height, the straight delicate nose, and chiseled lips and chin, were of a mould of ideal beauty. His complexion was a clear olive, his waving hair of a softer shade than black, and his large dark eyes, had all the Italian softness and expression. He wore the mustache, that suits so well the physiognomy of the southern races. Something kind and genial in his eyes and smile attracted me at once. I had never seen any one except my father who possessed so prepossessing an appearance. I was still observing him, when Lady Russell turned to me, and said,

"Will you be so good, Miss Stuart, as to sing us something?"

I knew it would not do to refuse, but I was so frightened that I absolutely trembled as the Count arose and politely handed me to the harp. I chose a simple, but beautiful air, from *Linda*. My voice, at first low and quivering, became pure and powerful as I recovered self-possession. When I concluded, the Count said, in good English, though with a foreign accent

"Bravo, signorina, your voice is very beautiful."

"Yes, that was really very well," added Lady Russell.

The Count spoke to her for some minutes in a low voice, while I sat running my fingers listlessly over the harp strings, and then with a gracious salutation to her, and to me, he took his leave.

Her ladyship was in a very good humor. She said she was glad to see us act like sensible girls, and that it was a very fine thing to be governess in the family of a man of rank and wealth. She told me she had sent to my room some wearing apparel, which I should need before I received my salary, which was to be payable quarterly. I was quitting the room, when she added,

“One moment, I wish to tell you something while I remember it. I have educated you and procured you this situation, it will be your own fault if you do not keep it. If you should wish to change you must seek another for yourself. I cannot take that responsibility again. Any persevering, well educated girl, with your advantages can take care of herself. You may of course use my name as a reference. I wish you to repeat this to your sister.”

Her words were cold and wounding, but sadly, resigned, I answered nothing and returned to my room.

Estelle asked me a thousand questions, and was delighted when I told her I was sure from the Count's face and manner that he possessed a kind and generous heart.

The things that Lady Russell had sent me were some thin stuffs for dresses, suited to the warm clime of Italy, some underclothing, etc. I put them in my trunk, and they all was ready for my departure.

CHAPTER XXI.

It was the last day I was to pass with the companion of my childhood, the sister and friend of my youth. There were a thousand things I had wished to say to her, but I could think of nothing. The hours flew on after partaking of a little dinner. We extinguished our light in order to see the beautiful moonlight streaming in, and seated ourselves by the open window. It was a very warm night, in the middle of May, and the gentle air was refreshing. Our eyes did not rest on the wide plains and waving trees, they had been accustomed to, nothing but roofs and chimneys of houses, and church steeples in the distance met our view, but the sky, with its floating clouds was above us, and the silvery moonlight shone softly down, trembling on Estelle's golden hair, and adding brilliancy to her effulgent eyes. It was quite impossible for me to speak cheerfully now, my own heart was too heavy. Estelle wound her arms gently around my neck, and said,

"Irene, you will not forget me when you are far away? You will not fail to do what you have promised?"

"Estelle!" I answered, reproachfully, my eyes filling with tears, "do you believe I can ever forget you?"

"I should not think you could," she said, "I can never forget you, Irene. It was your hand that first led me when I was a tiny child; it was you who was always near to comfort

me when we wandered with our poor father, and since we have become girls it is to you I have confided all my thoughts, and loved you better than anything in this world, dear sister."

I clasped her in my arms, and told her that I dearly loved her, that my affection for her was so inwoven with my life that one could not exist without the other, and so I soothed her till the moon was high in the heavens, and the air grew cold, and we closed the window, and prepared to go to rest, for the last time that we should share the same pillow. She was more rapid than I, and when I rose from my knees, after having knelt with the reverential habit of childhood, to say the nightly prayer, she had lain down, and was already slumbering. I paused a moment to look at her. How beautiful and innocent she was; the bright hair waved around her brow and damask cheeks, and the breath came gently from her parted lips, the carelessly arranged night dress showed one lovely shoulder, round and white as marble, and the exquisite bosom, on which a small golden locket, containing our father's hair, rose and fell with her breathing. I ought to have mentioned long ago, in its proper place, that on the day we left doctor Miller's house, his wife had given this locket to Estelle, and one to me. I had shared with her the lock of my father's hair, and we had worn the lockets attached to black ribbon around our necks ever since. They were the most precious things we possessed. I said to myself, as I went to rest beside her, that if a pure noble nature meets any recompense in this world her fate would be happy.

In the morning Lady Russell informed me that the Count intended taking ship direct to Leghorn, and proceed from thence to Florence through Pisa. Probably through compliment to him, her ladyship proposed accompanying us to the ship; she thought it best for Estelle not to go, but I

insisted, and she finally yielded this point. At noon the Count's carriage was at the door. We descended to the drawing-room, and Lady Russell presented the Count to Estelle. He looked surprised and glanced from her to me, with an expression of interest. We went down, entered the carriage, and drove rapidly away. Her ladyship talked to the Count all the way, sometimes in English, sometimes in Italian, but it seemed to me that he answered mechanically and looked abstracted. When we arrived at the wharf he alighted and assisted us out, then looking around he said,

"What has become of our ship? I do not see it," then turning to a man who stood near, he asked,

"Where is the *Ariadne*?"

"It has cast off into the stream, sir," he answered, "but there is a boat here waiting for some passengers. I'll show you."

He guided us through the confusion of people, carts, boxes, and bales, to the edge of the wharf, where a boat was tied to the bank, with the sailors seated in it.

"Ah, it's yer honor," one of them said, as they arose, "the *Ariadne* is off there, sir, but we'll take yer to her in a minute."

"Farewell, your ladyship. Adieu, signorina," said the Count, giving his hand to Lady Russell, and bowing to Estelle.

"Adieu Count, I hope to see you soon again," her ladyship replied, and taking my hand with the most indifferent air imaginable, she said,

"Good bye, be a good girl," and added in a low voice, "say good bye to your sister, quick, don't make a scene."

What could I say to this worldly woman, who made light of the holiest feelings. I dropped her hand without a word, without a sentiment of gratitude, and Estelle fell into my

arms. Again and again I pressed her to my heart, and kissed off her tears, and blessed her, and then tearing myself away, the Count put me in the boat, sat down beside me, and the rapid strokes of the oars bore us swiftly from the shore.

I watched her through my blinding tears, standing motionless where I had left her, till she was lost in the increasing distance, and then I bowed my head upon my hands and wept as though my heart would break.

CHAPTER XXII.

As we neared the ship, the Count said to me, gently,
"Strive to compose yourself, my dear young lady."

I dried the tears from my cheeks, and made a desperate effort to command myself. When the boat was drawn along side the ship the Count ascended a ladder on the side, and assisted me to gain the deck. The sails were all set; the sailors said the wind was fair, and we should sail immediately. The Count conducted me below into the ladies saloon. There were several women and children there. I procured a state-room, and laying off my things, sat down to think. I had suffered so poignantly that it was impossible for me to feel more. I endeavored to be calm, remembering that to better our destinies I needed strength and courage. I felt the motion of the ship, gently at first, but becoming by degrees more and more rough, till at last I could hardly stand. Every one in the saloon was becoming seasick, and I heard them going into their state-rooms. I felt only a slight giddiness in my head, but thinking it might be better to lie down, I threw myself on my birth, and soon fell asleep. I slumbered some hours, a knocking at the door of my state-room aroused me. I arose, surprised to find that I had slept, and opened it. It was a servant with a message from the Count, that he was waiting to take me to dinner, if I was not seasick. I hastily arranged my hair and dress, and joined him at the door of the saloon.

"You are not sick?" he asked, smiling.

"It seems not, I have only a trifling head-ache."

"It is the case with myself. A sea voyage at this season of the year is delightful to me. I have a box of books on board, they are at your service if you should wish any."

I thanked him, quite surprised at his consideration for me. Nothing more was said at dinner.

As we arose from the table he asked me if I would not like to walk on deck, and see the sun set. I told him yes.

"You had better put a shawl around your shoulders," he said, "it is rather cool."

I ran to my state-room, threw on a shawl, and ascended with him, he gave me his arm, and we paced the deck. The almost paternal kindness of his manner banished my timidity, and I felt as if I had known him for a long time. The sun, resembling a ball of fire, had just touched the horizon, surrounded by clouds of crimson gold and purple. A slight breeze curled the waves, and the vessel, with all sails set, skimmed the waters like a light winged bird.

"Ah, our beautiful Italian skies," said the Count, emphatically, and speaking Italian, "when you have seen them all others will sink into insignificance, in comparison."

"You love your country, signor," I said.

"Oh! fondly. It is the land of poetry and music; the classic ground of the world, the shrine to which pilgrims of art will ever journey."

His words called up the memory of the time, when, in my imagination, Italy was associated with everything enchanting. How little I had dreamed that I should ever see it. What strange things come to pass. The moon had risen, and a thousand stars gemmed the heavens. Silently enjoying the calm beauty of the scene, I listened to the Count, who related to me many anecdotes of his travels, and

beguiled the hours with his varied entertaining conversation until it was late.

Mornings and evenings, after this, we walked the deck, or sat, protected from the sun by the awning, reading the great Italian or English authors. In the eight years passed at school I had had no opportunity of reading, and it was a novel and delightful thing to see, for the first time, the thoughts of the great of the earth, with the companionship of a fine, cultivated intellect, and appreciative taste. The Count did not possess the daring originality of thought, or the splendid imagination that characterizes genius, but his reflective mind, and lively fancy, his great knowledge of books and the world, joined to a noble disposition, rendered him a charming, instructive associate. In his long conversations with me he drew me so away from myself that I forgot to grieve. It was only when alone that I remembered sad realities.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WE had fair winds and a quick voyage. When we arrived at Leghorn the Count hired a private carriage to convey us to Florence. We started early in the morning and traveled all day. The sun was declining, and the air deliciously soft as we approached Florence. The scene was enchanting. The Arno winding amid its green banks, the beautiful city encircled by hills, crowned with innumerable villas, and the picturesque dress of the peasants delighted me so much that I could not repress exclamations of delight. We entered the city, and following the road ascended one of the hills I had seen in the distance. The sun had set, the pure azure of the sky was almost entirely concealed by many tinted clouds, whose gorgeous softness was indescribable. A few minutes drive brought us to a magnificent villa, standing on the brow of a hill, and surrounded by a beautiful garden. We alighted, and walked through the ground, up a broad flight of steps into a marble terrace, whose bank was enameled with flowers. On either side of the door a fountain threw up its silvery spray with a soft murmur. The Count rang, and an old grey-haired Italian servant unclosed the door, and on seeing the Count, burst into expressions of surprise and pleasure. The Count checked him, and said in a low voice,

“Tell Marietta to come to me, and do not mention to any

one except her that I have come. I wish to surprise my daughters."

The servant disappeared, and the Count guided me into a small sized but very elegant room, on the left side of the hall. The floor was of marble, and the walls painted in fresco, and adorned with statues.

"Be seated here one moment, signorina," said he, "I have sent for a servant to conduct you to your apartment, I know you must be fatigued."

While he was speaking, a young girl, apparently a domestic, from her dress, entered, and courtesying with much grace, told the Count she was glad to see him back again. He received her welcome very kindly, and then told her to show me to the room which had been prepared for me. I followed her to it. It was above, one flight of stairs, at the end of the corridor, and overlooked the terrace. It was a chamber of moderate dimensions; the floor covered with a Persian carpet, and the furniture of rose wood; curtains of lace looped back from the window allowed the fragrance of the flowers to enter. I was enchanted with the view from the window, with the beautiful refinement of everything around me. I thought this place an Eden. The ringing of the dressing bell reminded me that I must prepare for dinner. I knew it was the custom for governesses to take their meals with the housekeeper, still I desired to make as respectable an appearance as possible. I dressed my hair in its simple fashion, and changed my dress; these slight preparations over I leaned on the toilet table, and involuntarily my thoughts wandered back to my cherished sister. A knock at the door disturbed my reflections. It was old Pedro, the servant, who had admitted us who came to conduct me to dinner. The housekeeper's rooms were in the first story, in the back part of the building. Her dining-

room was handsomely furnished, and dinner was served in a manner that appeared to me very elegant. There was no one in the room when I entered, but in a minute a little old woman, dressed in black, came in, and spoke to me in Italian, in a kind, motherly manner.

"My name is Signora Itrine, child," she said, "and I am very glad to welcome you here."

I thanked her, and we sat down to dine. She had a very queer face, several times I found myself looking at her innumerable wrinkles, hair almost entirely grey, and faded features. She appeared good natured, and exceedingly talkative. She gave me a long account of my predecessor, of which I did not hear ten words, then she commenced to speak of the Count and his family, and I listened. She had lived with the Count twenty years, she said, his wife had been dead nine years, she was an English woman, handsome, but very haughty and violent. The Count she extolled extravagantly; he was the kindest, noblest being in the world, she said. His eldest daughter was just eighteen, a very fine young lady, but a little haughty like her mother. There was Signora Cornelli, the Count's sister, who lived with them, a kind lady, and the Count's little daughter, to whom I was to be governess, a perfect little darling. Her elaborate descriptions occupied all dinner time. I had risen to return to my room, when Pedro came with a request from the Count that I should come to the saloon. It was opposite to the room I had entered on my arrival, a large apartment, furnished with taste; my feet buried themselves in the mossy carpet; the chairs and couches were of blue damask, and rose, and satin wood. The large arching windows were draped with exquisite lace, and statues of rare workmanship filled niches in the wall, between them mirrors and pictures were hung. A light fanciful chandelier diffused a

softened light. The Count was seated on a lounge. Standing by a harp near him I saw a very beautiful but arrogant looking girl ; her figure tall and Diana-like in its proportions was shown to advantage, by a dress of pale blue silk, low in the neck, and with short sleeves. Her face was long, and a little pointed at the chin, her features delicately aquiline. Her ivory white complexion, large azure eyes, and fair hair, waving in curls on her cheeks, and twisted in a large knot behind, indicated in an instant her English blood. A rather large mouth, depressed at the corners, lent an unamiable expression to her face.

The Count arose, and said,

"Miss Stuart, Countess Francisca, my daughter."

She glanced at me, and made an almost imperceptible movement of her head. I felt the blood mount to my face, and returned a salutation, equally forbidding.

"And this my other daughter, your little pupil, Signorina Celeste," said the Count.

I had not observed this lovely child. She had the blue eyes, and light hair of her sister, but a very different expression pervaded her scant low brow, and innocent eyes. The pouting lips were uplifted for a kiss, with childish grace. I pressed her in my arms, thinking of Estelle.

"Do you speak Italian, Signorina?" she said, in correct English.

"A little, Signorina Celeste."

"Oh, call me Celeste, please. I do not like a little girl called Signorina."

I smiled at the child's good sense. The Count invited me to sit down. I did so, and Celeste drew close to me.

"I think," she said, speaking Italian, and in the most artless way conceivable, "that I shall like you much better than my last governess. She was not young and pretty

like you. She was tall and thin, and had a sharp voice, but you have such soft eyes, such a pretty mouth and little hands. I know I shall love you very much."

"Why, Celeste, what in the world are you talking about," said the father, laughing, "it will not do to pay such plain compliments."

The child had really made me blush, but she had done it quite unintentionally. The Count asked me what were my impressions of Florence, and I timidly expressed my admiration of all that I had seen. Francisca played chords upon the harp, and seemed entirely unconscious of my presence. Her disdainful manner rendered me so uncomfortable that when Celeste's nurse came to take her away I took advantage of it, to say good night and retire.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE next morning, after breakfast, a servant came and conducted me to the school room, which was only a few steps from my own. It was fitted up with musical instruments, books maps, and desks. In a little while Celeste joined me, and I proceeded to ascertain how far she had advanced in her studies. For a child of her age she was very proficient, already her little fingers ran over the harp and piano with ease, and she possessed a sweet voice. We remained in the school room till four, after that my time was my own, till six, when I took Celeste to drive in the Count's beautiful carriage. The road lay midst the loveliest landscapes, and as we returned we saw the sun set magnificently, flooding everything with golden light. The Count was standing on the terrace. Celeste stopped a moment for a kiss from him, and then ran up stairs.

"How do you find your pupil?" he said to me with his sweet smile.

"Very intelligent and docile," I replied.

"I am glad, as much for your sake as for hers. It is dreadful to strive to teach stupidity. Have you had a pleasant drive?"

"Oh! delightful. What a balmy clime, who could fail to be happy here?"

"Ah! cares and disappointments are everywhere, that human beings are." He paused thoughtfully, and I was entering the house, when he said,

"I wish to ask you something, Signorina. You have doubtless heard of the Palazzo Veechio, that contains so many masterpeices of art. Would you not be pleased to visit it to-morrow?"

I was so surprised and grateful for his kindness that the tears rose to my eyes. I thanked him warmly, and accepted his offer, and then went to my room.

That night I wrote to Estelle, and told her all my impressions of Italy, and of the Count's family. Though the country was more beautiful than my dreams, and the Count excessively kind, I wrote I should return to England as soon as possible, nothing should keep me from her side.

The next day I went with the Count to the Palazzo Veechio. You may imagine the enthusiasm with which I beheld those great relics of art.

At twilight Celeste and I were walking on the terrace, when the Count came and joined us.

"Celeste did not use to be so fond of her governesses," he said, looking at the child, whose arm was around my waist.

"Ah, I did not like them as I like her."

"Why do you like her, Celeste?"

"I don't know. I like her because I like her."

"A very philosophical explanation," said her father, laughing, "nevertheless I must say I have faith in Celeste's doctrine of 'liking people because you like them.'"

"I think it is as good a reason as one is ever able to give for liking another," I said.

"It is true," answered the Count, "some people repel and others attract me, without my being able to tell why."

We were passing around the side of the terrace, happening to raise my eyes I saw Francisca and another lady seated at a window above.

"That is my aunt," whispered Celeste to me.

She resembled her brother, but her face lacked the interest of his. Francisca held a book in her hand, and her eyes were upon it, but an expression of anger contracted her fine eye-brows. It instantly occurred to me that she was displeased with her father's condescension to me. The thought made me uneasy. I became absent, replied to the Count in monosyllables and was glad when he was summoned to dinner. A few moments after, I went to mine, and after evading Signora Itrine's request to pass the evening with her, I returned to my apartment, seated myself at my window, and fell into thought. I wondered if it was possible that Francisca, so high in social position, so blessed in all her relations, could be indignant at a few kind words, and attentions that had cheered my lonely heart. I thought that she, the Count's eldest child, heiress to his wealth, beautiful and intelligent, naturally possessed a great influence over him. She might prejudice him against me and render my sojourn with them, whether it be long or short, very disagreeable; independent of this consideration I did not desire to be at enmity with her, my soul was not formed for hatred and strife. It darkened, and the radiant stars came out in the blue heaven, still I sat pondering. Strains of music floating from the saloon, and the sound of footsteps on the terrace attracted my attention, I leaned out of the window. The moon shone brilliantly, two gentlemen were ascending the marble steps. One of them was advanced in life, but his fine form was still majestically erect. His long hair was entirely white, and his face mild and benevolent. His companion was young and handsome, but of a profligate appearance. I presumed that this was one of the Count's receptions, of which Signora Itrine had spoken to me. Twice a year the Count received all his friends, without invitation,

to pass an hour in the charming, unconstrained intercourse of Italian society. I was about to withdraw from the window when the younger gentleman raised his eyes and looked intently at me. I drew back in alarm, as if I had committed some dreadful action, closed the window, and shortly after, went to rest.

CHAPTER XXV.

SEVERAL days elapsed without any incident worthy of record; the Count's manner to me continued the same and I concluded that I had been mistaken with regard to Francisca. One morning I heard that the Count had gone to Naples, and would be absent for some days. I missed him greatly, as there was now no one to whom I could impart a thought or feeling. When by chance I encountered Signora Corneli, she spoke to me cordially, and I liked her very much, for she possessed all her brother's gentleness of heart, but she never came to my room, and I knew her only superficially. As to Francisca, when I met her on the terrace, or in the halls, she sometimes deigned to evince a consciousness of my existence by a nod, and at others passed me without even this acknowledgment. Celeste was almost constantly with me, but though she was a sweet little creature, and I dearly loved her, she was but a child, and could not sympathize with me. Many visitors came to the villa, and it was very gay, but the sounds of mirth reaching me in my lonely room only reminded me of my isolated, dependent position.

A circumstance occurred at this time, which troubled me very much. Celeste and I were wandering in the garden one evening. We had paused a moment to admire a large rose bush, when I heard steps on the walk. I looked around and beheld the handsome young gentleman I had seen from my window. He removed his hat, and said to me, politely,

"Can you tell me, Signorina, if the Count has returned home."

"He has not, sir," I replied, a little surprised.

"Will you allow me to inquire if you are a relative of the Count's?" he said.

"I am only the governess, sir," I responded, quite astonished at this question.

He bowed, and passed on, and in a few minutes I had forgotten the occurrence. The next day I met him on the terrace. He stopped, and making some comment on the beauty of the scenery, held me in conversation for some time. After that I encountered him everywhere, in the hall, on the terrace, in the garden; one would have said that I sought the opportunities. He spoke to me boldly, and began to pay me extravagant compliments. I was exceedingly frightened and annoyed. If Francisca, with her haughty, jealous temper, should see him address me—should hear his audacious words, what would be the consequence; beside this, the man was odious to me. It was more than time for me to receive an answer from Estelle, none came, and I was anxious, and nervous. One morning I was in the school room, striving to concentrate my wandering thoughts on the lesson I was giving Celeste, when some one knocked at the door; I said,

"Come in."

It opened, and the Count entered. Had he been a dearly beloved brother his presence could not have gladdened me more. As the genial sunshine disperses mists, his appearance banished all my fears and anxieties. There was no embarrassment in my greeting—to give him my hand, and tell him I was happy to see him, was as natural as to breathe.

"I am glad to return," he said, "there is no place as dear and beautiful to me as my own home. But Signorina are

you not well? you look very pale. Is it you, naughty little girl, that troubles her?" he added to Celeste, who had climbed upon a chair, to put her arms about his neck.

"No indeed," I said, "it is not her, she is a sweet child."

"I know very well, papa, something grieves Signorina, for she was weeping, last night." Celeste said, very earnestly.

"I will wager anything that I can guess what is the matter. Signorina has not heard from her sister."

Tears filled my eyes.

"Ah, you see I have guessed rightly. If you will allow, your little pupil to go down with me one moment, we will look among the letters which have arrived this morning. I think we shall find one for you."

I told him, certainly, and she descended with him. Presently she came bounding back, holding up a letter.

"For you," she said; "You see papa was right!"

"Oh! thank you, thank you, dear," I said, catching it eagerly from her hand, and hastily tearing it open, I read the dear lines.

I will not insert the letter, here, but I will tell you briefly what it contained. The day after my departure she had gone to her abode, home, she said, she could not call it. Mr. Mouley Ashton, was a quiet, common-place, business man; his wife very like Lady Russell, her three scholars were pretty amiable girls, but without intelligence. No one was unkind to her, but she was always, always alone. Again she begged me not to forget my promise, to her, "I can endure anything," she wrote, "if I can only hope that we shall soon be re-united." She was happy to learn, by my letter, that I was so agreeably situated, but once more, she repeated, "*do not*, do not let Italy wean you from England, and Estelle. I answered her at once; I strove to cheer and console her, and carefully concealed all that was

disagreeable. I assured her that I desired nothing so much as to fulfil my promise, and added, that we should comfort ourselves with the reflection, that though our separation was painful, it would be of use to teach us strength, and self-reliance. After this, I returned to my duties with a lightened heart. I saw no more of my troublesome gallant, he had ceased to visit the villa, for which I was heartily thankful.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SHORTLY after his return, the Count observed to me, that I must sometimes find time hanging on my hands, and requested me to avail myself of his library, for amusement, whenever I wished. I took advantage of this permission to pass almost all my evenings there. I generally had possession of it after dark, and many hours I have whiled away, forgetting my sorrows and almost my own existence, in the lives and thoughts of others.

Time went; I received another letter from Estelle; she wrote calmly, but in a tone of sad resignation that touched me deeply. I looked doubtingly at the future, and wondered if it had nothing for us, but this life of solitude and dependence. Were there no other wants in life but a shelter for one's head, and something to eat and wear.

One evening, I had just finished dinner, and returned to my room, when Celeste came running in.

"Dear Signorina," she said, "I have not to go to bed for an hour and a half yet, let me stay with you; I will be very good."

"Very well, Celeste," I answered. I am going to sit here and see the moon rise, if you wish to look out you may sit upon my knee."

She came and climbed up, and playing with my hair, she

"Two gentleman, papa's friends, came here this afternoon and they are going to stay some weeks, I think. I saw them at dinner."

I was thinking of something else, and made no reply, and she prattled on, speaking English, as I had desired her always to do, with her pretty foreign accent. There was a gentle tap at the door, and she slid off my knee, and went to open it. It was Pedro, with a request from the Count that I should bring Celeste to the saloon.

"May I go and tell nurse to let me put on another dress, Signorina? this is school dress, you know," she asked, with sparkling eyes.

I told her certainly, and she hastened away. I was vexed at being summoned to encounter strangers, my position always humiliated me; however, being obliged to go, I quickly dressed myself. Since my arrival at the villa I had grown somewhat conscious of the personal advantages I possessed, and, consequently, gave more attention to my toilet. I no longer wore my hair with the same simplicity enjoined at school. I allowed it to wave in its natural ringlets, and then gathered them in a large knot behind. I put on a dress of India muslin, cut low in the neck, and with half long flowing sleeves. Speaking without vanity, because very little remains now, it would have been difficult to have found a figure more symmetrical or more elegantly rounded than mine. I was quite ready when Celeste came back. A dress of silk, as blue as her eyes, contrasted well with her light, flowing curls, and rosy cheeks.

"Ah, how pretty you look, Signorina. Now let us go down," she said,

We descended. As we entered the saloon I saw Francisca seated on an ottoman, near one of the windows, opposite to a gentleman, with whom she was in earnest

Conversation. The Count and another gentleman were seated near Signora Cornelli.

As we drew near, the Count arose, bowed to me, and said, in English,

“Allow me, Miss Stuart, to present Mr. Carrall to you, one of your countrymen.”

I was so much surprised at this presentation, that, for a moment I forgot to bow. Recovering myself, I returned the gentleman's salutation, and sat down in a chair the Count had placed for me.

“This is the pet, Mr. Carrall,” said the Count, drawing Celeste to him.

“A very pretty one,” he replied, smiling. He was a perfectly English looking person, who had the cordial, sincere, but rather abrupt manner that characterizes the nation. He and the Count were occupied with Celeste, and I turned my eyes to Francisca, and her companion. Her manner, usually so languid, and indifferent, was animated, and attentive. The gentleman was speaking, and though I could not hear the words, the tone of his voice, and his gestures were very earnest, and impressive. As well as I could judge, from a distance, he was about the medium height, and his figure, though elegant, was not particularly striking. His face was a fine oval, but his aquiline nose was a little too large, and his mouth too wide for beauty, though one could hardly regret the latter, for it showed, to great advantage, his dazzling teeth. His head was finely formed, and covered with dark brown, waving curls; his brow, broad and intellectual, and the eye-brow beautifully expressive; but the charm of his face was his eyes, large, dark brown in color, and the most eloquently, irresistibly seductive, I have ever beheld. Analyzing the face and form, no one could have called them handsome, but taken as a whole, it would have been

impossible to imagine a more attractive exterior. I was so absorbed in my survey that it never occurred to me that my intent gaze might be remarked. Suddenly he arose, offered his arm to Francisca, and led her to the harp, which stood within two feet of where I was seated. After placing her at the instrument, he said to the Count, in a free-toned, melodious voice, and in Italian,

"Ah, that is Celeste, I suppose. Allow me to speak to her for one moment, Countess, for the sake of our old acquaintance." Celeste put her hand in his, and looked highly delighted. The Count arose, and said, graciously,

"Signor Cellini, Miss Stuart."

I knew not why the beating of my heart accelerated as I met those radiant eyes. I resumed my seat, strangely confused. Francisca's glance was bent on me, her face, so smiling a moment before, became dark. On a nearer view, I perceived that Signor Cellini was about thirty—older than I had thought—his complexion was fair, for an Italian, and his small whiskers, and mustache, were of a lighter brown than his hair. Every one remained silent, supposing Francisca was going to sing, but after pretending for a minute, she said, abruptly,

"You must really excuse me, Signor, I cannot sing, I have no voice to-night."

"Francisca," said her father, archly, "how do you know that you have lost your voice?"

"Oh, I pray you, Signorina, do not be so cruel as to deprive us of the pleasure of hearing you," said Signor Cellini.

"I am sorry, but I cannot oblige you," answered Francisca, coldly, and rising from the instrument, she went and sat down by Mr. Carrall, and entered into conversation. I saw by the Count's flashing eyes, that he was offended; he turned quickly to me, and said,

"May we ask you, Signorina, to oblige us with some music?"

"I was about to refuse, absolutely, partly because I did not wish to increase Francisca's anger, partly because it wounded me to be asked simply on account of her refusal, when Signor Cellini bent toward me, and said, in his winning accents,

"I join my entreaties to the Count's, Signorina."

It seemed that I was suddenly deprived of the power of saying no, for I allowed the Count to lead me to the harp, and sang a beautiful air from *Roberts*. I think I sang it well, for when I concluded the gentlemen clapped their hands and cried, "Bravo." They urged me to sing again, but I would not, and returned to my seat. The Count endeavored to draw me into conversation, but I could not keep my eyes from Francisca's face, which expressed the greatest sarcasm, and passion. Signora Cornelli, too, looked displeased, and when I addressed her she answered very coldly. Wounded, embarrassed, and feeling myself in a false position, I whispered to Celeste, that it was time for her to go, and rising, bade them good night, and retired.

CHAPTER XXVII.

I FEAR Celeste did not profit much by her lessons the next day, for I was constantly revolving in my mind the scenes of the preceding night. Signor Cellini was especially in my thoughts. Often when I should have been paying attention to grammars, and music books, I was recalling the inexpressible beauty of his glance. Celeste was indisposed, in the afternoon, and this prevented us from taking our usual drive. Not wishing to go to the terrace, or garden alone, I remained in my room until dark, then I went to the library, lighted the chandelier, and taking a volume from its shelf, sat down by the large study table, in the center, of the room, rested my book upon it, and began to read. It was a translation of a German metaphysical author, speaking of incomprehensible subjects, with a ghostly melancholy that made my blood chill in the veins. I was terrified at the desolating thoughts, and yet they possessed an undefinable attraction. I read on, but cold, lifeless abstractions did not satisfy me. I threw it aside, and took a favorite Italian poet; this did not call up shadows, but made me feel warm, animated life. I do not know how long I had been reading, but it must have been late, for every thing in the villa was quiet, when the opening of the library door startled me, and I looked up. Signor Cellini was standing on the threshold, bearing a light in his hand.

"Excuse me, I pray you," he said, taking a step back, "I was not aware that there was any one here, I came to get a book."

"There is no excuse requisite, sir," I said, rising in great confusion, "I have been reading, and have forgotten the time. Do not let me keep you from entering, sir, I am going to retire immediately."

"No," he said, smiling, "I am not coming in to frighten you away. If you will remain where you are I will enter and get my book and be gone at once."

I resumed my seat, so much embarrassed that I scarcely knew what I was doing. He entered, and closed the door, but without latching it, then going to the row of shelves nearest to it, he read the titles of the books, with the assistance of the light he carried. Presently, without turning or desisting from his occupation, he said to me,

"May I ask you, Signorina, if you are English?"

"I am, sir," I answered, feeling pleased in being addressed, without knowing why.

"You speak Italian very well, but that is not surprising, with your musical ear."

"You are complimenting me, sir," I said, the blood rising to my cheek.

"I do not intend to do so, I assure you, Signorina, but I have a book at last, I will not trespass on you any longer."

"You are not trespassing on me in the least, sir," I said, with an earnestness that astonished myself—speaking from an irresistible impulse, without thinking that I might be misconstrued.

"I have, at any rate, prevented you from reading," he said, approaching the table, and looking at the books upon it, "Metaphysics and poetry. Do you take any interest in politics?"

"I am hardly capable of doing so in my ignorance. I have never read any political works."

"I have here an English book. 'The Lives of Great English Statesmen.' Alas! poor Italy," he added, suddenly, with a sigh, "there is no field for statesmanship, in a land where freedom of opinion, and discussion, is prohibited, man is deprived of the glorious privilege of reason, and only the intellect that will sell itself can succeed."

I replied, timidly, distrustful of myself; he continued the conversation, and at last sat down. Passing from one subject to another; he spoke of arts, sciences, and his travels. He possessed the delightful art of drawing out another's opinions, and understood (a rare accomplishment) as well how to listen, as to speak. He did not, like many brilliant men, strive for effect; his impressive manner indicated an earnest mind. I was astonished at the profundity of his knowledge, and judgment, as well as the warmth, and beauty of his imagination. I listened to the noble thoughts, flowing so eloquently from his lips, and watched his face light, and his splendid eyes kindle with the fire of intellect, till catching his enthusiasm, and forgetting my timidity, I responded with equal animation. It must have been more than an hour that we sat there, but it appeared to me only a few minutes. Truly, for the time, I had forgot everything, but the person with whom I spoke. He arose at last, and taking his book and light, he said, with a smile,

"I have not kept my word, Signorina, but I cannot, really, tell whose fault it is. I hope it is not an unpardonable indiscretion on my part, Good night."

He left me, and I hastened to my chamber, but not to sleep, for all the faculties of my mind were aroused, and it was hours before I became calm enough to repose.

I was tranquilly happy the next day. I was so innocent

minded, and so ignorant of social laws, that I never imagined I had committed a conventional impropriety. I recalled every word Cellini had uttered, his every look and tone, and wondered why one gifted with such intellect and eloquence, had not, already, rendered himself celebrated. Perhaps, unfortunately for himself, he had been born to wealth. At twenty he had entered the army, but he found there no scope for a noble ambition. After attaining considerable rank, at the age of twenty-five, he resigned his commission, and retired to private life. Society courted him, as his unrivalled powers of conversation, and the undefinable charm he exercised over all who approached him, made him its ideal. Pleased with this success, it may be more flattering to self-love than any other, he gradually lost his taste for solitude and self-communion, without which the greatest genius can accomplish nothing durable; and thus at thirty Giorani Cellini had acquired no other fame than that of the brilliant man of the world.

Pardon this digression—let me return to the day of which I was speaking. I was in my room, towards evening, when I heard the sound of voices and laughter on the terrace. I concealed myself behind the window curtain, and looked out. I saw Francisca, the Count, and his guests equipped for a horseback ride. Francisca wore a habit of blue cloth, and a little hat of black beaver, with plumes, placed coquetishly on one side, above the fair curls that floated to her shoulders. Her azure eyes were as full of light as the zenith at mid-day. She was animated, and her graceful air, and silvery laughter were so charming, that, for the first time in my life, I felt a slight pang of jealousy. The gentlemen wore riding coats and caps, and seemed in high spirits. I turned sadly away; I was alone, and uncared for. There are moments when we cannot help feeling envy.

A little while after I went to take a walk with Celeste. As we were returning I heard the quick galloping of a horse behind us, and stepped a little aside to allow it to pass, but to my surprise when it reached us, the gentleman mounted on it suddenly drew the rein, and leaped lightly off. It was Cellini.

"Good evening, Signorina Stuart. Good evening Signorina Celeste; this is a happy meeting. The Countess Francisca had the misfortune to lose a bracelet. We had reached the villa before she discovered the loss, and I have returned, but have not had the pleasure of finding it."

I never thought to inquire of myself what it was that caused my heart to palpitate, and the blood to rush to my cheek, in a hurrying tide. He walked beside us, leading his horse by the bridle. Celeste talked to him till my unaccountable agitation had subsided, and I joined in the conversation. When we reached the villa he left his horse at the gate, and accompanied us to the terrace. Fearing Francisca's anger and jealousy, if she saw me conversing with him, I yielded reluctantly to the imperative necessity, and pleading fatigue, hastily withdrew to my chamber.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

I WAS accustomed to rise very early in the morning, and pass the time before breakfast in the library, or on the terrace. Very frequently, after this, Cellini was my companion. We spoke always on literary or artistic subjects, and his perfectly respectful manner toward me, the total absence of gallantries and compliments, blinded me to the dangers of these meetings. I was now constantly happy. I no longer felt fear or anxiety, the sky was brighter, the earth fairer, and sometimes in the buoyancy of my spirits it seemed to me I trod upon air, and yet so little do we comprehend our own hearts, that I knew not what it was that, like a patent elixir, stirred the blood in my veins, and awakened all the vitality of my nature.

The Count came frequently to the school room, ostensibly to inquire after Celeste's progress, but he always had some words of delicate interest, and sympathy, for me. I seldom saw Francisca, except walking by moonlight, on the terrace, with Cellini, with whose society, I could easily perceive, she was delighted.

Mr. Carrall remained at the villa but a few days. He was going, the Count told me, to visit Egypt and the Holy Land.

I received two letters from Estelle. She patiently awaited the time when we should meet again. Had she become less dear to me, that my heart sank at the thought of leaving

Italy. Alas ! a feeling so intense that it absorbed all others, had taken possession of me, although I knew it not. A trifling thing revealed to me, at last, the secret of my heart.

Celeste and I had returned from our evening drive, she had run on, and entered the house before me. A little fatigued, I passed slowly through the hall, glancing carelessly into the saloon. The chandelier was not yet lighted, but it was not quite dark, and the moonlight stole softly in. Two forms were standing by one of the windows, I recognized Francisca and Cellini. He was speaking with his beautiful, persuasive eyes bent on her, I could not see her face, but her attitude was full of eager interest. It seemed as if a bandage had suddenly been removed from my eyes in an instant, by the tormenting pain that I suffered ; I comprehended my own feelings, I ran rapidly up stairs, entered my room, closed and locked the door, and sinking into a chair, burst into bitter, passionate tears. Cellini loved Francisca, and I, poor fool, loved him ; unconsciously, had given away my heart unsought. All that was dear, and beautiful in life had perished in a moment, how blank and objectless seemed existence. I had dreamed that I was stoically cold and calm, and awoke to the knowledge of an impassioned nature. I took off my bonnet and scarf, threw myself on my bed, and bathed my pillow with tears. Of all the pains, and sorrows, poor human nature is fated to endure, humiliation or self-distrust is the most agonizing. I felt that I possessed neither intellect, nor beauty, nor virtue ; that I was the most insignificant of human creatures ; why was such a poor, unfortunate being ever born ? I thought, despairingly.

It was long past midnight before I forgot my wretched feelings in sleep. There were knocks at my door several times, but I made no reply.

When I awoke, the next morning, I was astonished for a moment to find myself dressed and lying on the outside of the bed. My head ached violently. I arose, recalling the occurrence of the past night, with my heart beating fast with pain. My mirror showed me my face and eyes surrounded by black shadows. While arranging my dress I endeavored to reason calmly. I perceived the wisdom of seeing Cellini no more; perhaps, now that I was conscious of my own heart, I might betray myself, and then how great would be my shame and mortification. I would avoid the library and terrace, I would listen no more to his seductive tones. Ah! why had he sought my companionship to render me so unhappy.

The moment Celeste saw me she noticed my sad languid manner, and asked me what was the matter. I told her evasively that I was a little indisposed.

There was a closet, between the library and the school room, in which were kept painting and drawing materials. I went in there, in the afternoon, to get some pencils Celeste needed. I was searching for them, when I heard some one enter the library.

"Really, my dear friend," said the Count's voice, "it annoys me that I can discover nothing about it. When I question Francisca she answers evasively, I cannot, of course, speak to Cellini upon the subject, and so I remain in ignorance. Well, patience, we shall know in time."

"But this engagement was not positive, you say," said a strange voice.

"Not in the least," replied the Count, "his father and I have been friends for years. Four years ago, when I was at Turin, we agreed that when Francisca should be grown she and Giorani should meet, and if they should love each other, marry. There is no one in the world I should be so happy to see Francisca united to. It seems to me that she

cannot fail to love him, so intellectual and noble, and she is beautiful and attractive, and the faults of her character would be corrected by a true affection. Oh! I sincerely hope it may be as I wish."

I had listened involuntarily to this conversation; but at this moment, recollecting that I was committing a dishonorable action, I noiselessly escaped into the school room. I understood it all now. Ah! I thought, if I had never seen him. If I could only forget.

Two or three days passed sadly. One morning, the Count entered the school room, looking much troubled, and said to me,

"Our friend, Signor Cellini, is summoned from us in haste. His father is lying at the point of death, at Turin.

I strove to say some words of regret, in the tone of polite indifference usual on such occasions, but my voice faltered, and my cheek became crimson. Fortunately, the Count was pre-occupied, and after saying that Signor Cellini would depart immediately, he left. I felt an inexpressible longing to behold him once more. I asked Celeste if she did not wish to go to my room and see him depart, from the window. She was delighted to be allowed to do so, and we hastened thither. In a quarter of an hour, which I spent in agitated thought, Cellini and the Count came out upon the terrace. The face of the former was pale and melancholy. He shook hands cordially with some friends within the door, and then quickly descended the steps, followed by the Count. I gazed wistfully after him; only the presence of Estelle restrained my tears. Thinking of my return to England, my heart sadly whispered, I should never—never see him again.

CHAPTER XXIX.

I HAD been with the Count nearly three months, it seemed to me years. Estelle had written me that when she received her salary, she would advertise, and, as soon as she could, procure me a governessship in London, that I should return. I reproached myself for not feeling perfectly happy, in the prospect of our speedy re-union; but even my fond love for her was cold, beside my blind but vain idolatry for another.

The evening, of the day of Giorani's departure I went to walk upon the terrace with Celeste. We had been there but a few moments when the Count joined us, and we paced the terrace, conversing, for two hours. At first sad and listless, I replied with an effort, but he exerted himself to entertain me, and amused in spite of myself, I re-entered the house in a happier mood. Every day, for a week afterwards, he accompanied Celeste and me in our drives. I was a little surprised at this, but his manner had always evinced a calm regard for me, and I had come to look upon him almost as a brother, as day by day I discovered in him something more worthy of regard. Solitude was irksome to me, for books no longer diverted my sad thoughts; every night I sought the terrace, certain of meeting the Count to beguile the hours that passed so wearily alone.

One very warm night I descended ; there was no one visible, and not a sound broke the silence, save the low murmur of the fountains. All the landscape was bathed in moonlight, which is golden in this lovely clime. The distant city, reposing amidst its hills, looked like the fair but shadowy scene of a dream. The light night-blooming flowers, glowing upon the terrace, in alabaster vases, had unclosed their glowing petals to perfume the air. Fascinated by the poetry of the view, I gazed until I fell into reverie. I heard no footstep—knew not that any one was near me, till a hand was lightly laid upon my arm, and the Count said,

“What dream absorbs you, Signorina?”

I cannot explain how it was that those careless words aroused so much emotion ; the tears rushed to my eyes. I turned away my face and strove to master it, but like a sorrowing child, my heart heaved up, and the tears ran fast over my cheeks. The Count continued speaking, but receiving no reply, and seeing my averted head, he leaned forward and caught sight of my weeping face, drawing near to me, he said in an earnest and faltering voice,

“What is the matter, Signorina, has anything grieved or offended you ? Do not weep, if you are unhappy let me console you, Dear, dearest one, I love you.”

He had taken my hand, his own trembled violently. His face was flushed and agitated. What a throng of tumultuous thoughts rushed into my mind ; amazement predominated over all. I endeavored to withdraw my hand, but he held it gently, and continued,

“Pardon me, Irene, I had not intended to have startled you by so abrupt a confession, your tears forced it from me, for I love you, sweet one, as I have never loved before. For a long time I have wished to tell you of it, but let me speak calmly. Irene, the bright days of youth are flown ;

can you be happy as the wife of one who will be old while you will still be in the loveliness of youth? Reflect, interrogate your heart. If you can love me, I will devote my life to you. In the passionate days of old, at your feet I should have solicited an answer, but now, calmer, and wiser, I say to you, reflect."

He pressed my hand to his lips, and left me, and with a bewildered brain I retired to my chamber. Agitatedly pacing the floor, I tried to think. So sudden and unexpected was this event that I could hardly realize it. The friend for whom I felt so much respect, and sisterly affection, had become my lover; belonging to the nobility of Florence, he renounced the prejudices of rank and wealth, to offer his hand to a penniless governess. How I wished that I could give him all my heart, and it were worthy of him. Strange inconsistency of human nature, that my impassioned affection was bestowed on one who thought not of me; but what mattered my love since it was utterly vain. The Count offered me wealth and position, a tender friend and intellectual companion; and I doubted not that his generous heart would accept Estelle as a sister. I had never dared to hope for such a happy fate. Next to Giorani no one was dearer to me than the Count, why then did I hesitate? It was the scruple of an honest mind that forbade me to deceive—would that I had heeded it. For a long, long time I pondered. At last, calmly, determinedly, I resolved to accept him, and then, wearied, I sought my bed to forget myself in sleep. The next day Celeste told me that her father had mounted his horse, and ridden away, immediately after breakfast, and that he had told her he should not return until evening. I spent the day in the school-room, as usual. I was in my chamber after dinner, when a servant brought a message that the Count desired to see me in the garden. I went down, feeling

indescribably strange. The Count was waiting for me at the foot of the marble steps ; he silently placed my hand upon his arm, and led me to one of the paths bordered with shrubbery. Neither spoke for some moments. From his frequent, and deep sighs, he appeared to be struggling for composure. At length he said,

"Irene, dear one, speak to me frankly, do not fear. I love you so much that I seek your happiness rather than my own. Look up, and answer me. Tell me if the joy of possessing one so beautiful and noble is reserved for me?"

I dared not raise my eyes. In a trembling voice I said,

"If I can make you happy, if, indeed, I am valuable to you, I am yours."

He stopped, his breast heaved, and he clasped me in his arms.

"Oh beautiful, beloved Irene, how happy you have made me. Ah ! is it possible that I am so blest. Never before has my heart beat thus ; never have I felt such joys. The world contains nothing more of happiness for me. I hold all within my arms."

How incomprehensible are the raptures of passion to one who does not share them. I wondered to see him so joyously agitated, when I was so cold.

"Tell me, dearest," he said, as we walked on with his arm around me, "when will you become mine ? Let it be soon, dear Irene, in a week, that is time enough for preparation, and what need is there of delay. You confide your happiness to my keeping, I accept it as a sacred trust, and, believe me, never, never shall you have cause to regret it.

"My dear Count," I said, "I wish to ask you one question, pardon it—"

"Count !" he interrupted, reproachfully, "do you still call

me Count? It is too cold and ceremonious, for your dear lips. Call me Claudius, and the name will be sweet, indeed, when you pronounce it."

"Well, then, Claudius," I said, with an effort. "I know that the Countess Francisca does not like me; how shall we be able to live beneath the same roof, on an equal footing?"

"Have no fear for that," he replied, "Francisca, with all her faults, obeys me. She knows now that I love you, and I have commanded her to extend to you, at least, the courtesy and kindness of an equal; besides this, I think that she will be married to Signor Cellini, ere long. I do not know this, they have thought best to conceal their intentions from me, but I am sure that Francisca admires him, and she possesses many attractions. In any event depend that I will arrange matters well. Francisca is haughty and passionate, but I believe she truly loves me. She is my child and I love her, but our natures are so entirely opposite that I have never been able to feel for her the confiding tenderness I have found in another relation. Ah, Irene, you cannot know how dear you are to me."

"Now, my beloved," he continued, "I will tell you one of my plans. You shall write, immediately, to your dear sister, to come to us. She can come by ship to Leghorn, there I will meet her, and conduct her to you. She shall live with us, and shall be my sister. If Francisca should not marry she will surely become more amiable, in the society of two such lovely and gentle beings. In contemplating the future I feel as happy as a joyous boy, with all life's beautiful illusions smiling before him. We shall be united in a week, shall we not, Irene?"

I had not learnt the woman's art, of saying no, when she means yes. I saw no objection to this arrangement, and

consented at once, and then, with the warmest gratitude, I had ever felt, I thanked him for his noble offer for Estelle. He would not hear me.

"No, no," he said, 'tis I who owe you thanks and gratitude. In giving me your love you bestow more than I can ever repay. My Irene, you are a precious jewel that all the world could not buy from me. Sweet one, the air grows cool, and you have no shawl, let us go in."

My fate was decided, I possessed all the love of a true, manly heart; in a week I would become a Countess, and mistress of this fair domain. Why was I not entirely happy? I breakfasted the next morning with the Count's family. Francisca saluted me politely, and, for the first time, addressed some remarks to me. I replied in the same manner. She had always treated me with such insulting disdain that it would have been rather strange had I become her friend in a moment; beside this, the thought that she possessed Giovanni's love, was sufficient to prevent a cordial feeling on my part; however, I was very glad that we were to live on amicable terms. No one could be more gracious, and pleasing, than she when she chose, and sometimes, after this, I found her so gentle, and so unpretending, that for a moment she won me to like her, against my will. I wrote to Estelle. Joyfully I imparted to her the event which had changed the aspect of our destinies. I bade her come to me at once, and if my love and care could render her happy, she should be so. I told her all, save *one thing*, which I could not confide to any one.

"I begged Claudius to allow me to continue to teach Celeste. He was unwilling, but consented at my earnest request. I found that an active occupation has the salutary influence of restraining the imagination, in some degree, and for this I eagerly courted it.

Every evening Claudius and I took a walk or drive. He related to me the history of his past life. His marriage had been one of convenience, and not very happy. He spoke of his wife with respect, and forbore to recall her faults, but it was easy to see that he had not loved her. He never wearied of speaking of the future, that seemed to him radiant; often he said,

“Who could have prophesied that I should find so much happiness, at my age, when generally life begins to lose its charm; that I should love one young enough to be my child. Sweet Irene, I have loved you ever since the day when, timid and blushing, you entered Lady Russell’s drawing-room.”

Unlimited means were placed at my disposal, and I furnished myself a handsome ward-robe. The intervening time passed rapidly, all was ready for the one great event in a woman’s life.

CHAPTER XXX.

CAN I ever forget the agitating emotion with which I rose on my wedding morning. Claudius had invited only a few intimate friends to the wedding, but intended giving a grand reception in the evening. The appointed hour was twelve. At eleven Nina, the maid the Count had employed for me, came to assist me to dress. Shortly after, Francisca entered; she had offered to be my bridesmaid, to my great astonishment, and I had of course accepted. She was already dressed, and looked very elegant. She wore a robe of valenciennes lace, over one of white satin, and a few natural flowers were arranged on her bosom and in her fair hair. My dress was exactly the same, with the addition of a magnificent veil fastened on the back of my head, crowned by a beautiful wreath of natural orange blossoms. This attire, and the animation excitement lent my face, altered me so much that I scarcely recognized the image the mirror showed me. While dressing I had taken off my inseparable companion, the locket containing my father's hair, and forgot to put it on again. Afterward I regretted this; with a childish superstition it seemed to me that my father had not blessed my marriage. As soon as my toilet was completed we descended. At the foot of the stairs Claudius and another

gentleman were awaiting us. The gentleman joined Francisca, the Count gave me his arm, and we entered the saloon. There were about twenty persons present, standing or sitting in groups, and conversing gaily. A priest, in his robes, was seated at the farther end of the apartment. We advanced to him, he arose, and after a momentary pause, commenced the marriage service of the Catholic church. I was cold and tremulous, the words rang in my ears, and it was with difficulty I retained sufficient composure to make the requisite responses. It was finished, and the people crowded around. Claudius presented them, and they all congratulated me. Signora Cornelli was among the first to offer me kind wishes. There were many fine looking men and women; prominent among them was a venerable looking gentleman, whom the Count introduced to me as Count Louis Foresti; I instantly recognized him as the person I had seen from my window, the day after my arrival at the villa. His appearance was so prepossessing that I listened with great pleasure to his courteous words. Claudius led the way to the dining hall, where breakfast was served. Seeing every one animated, I made an effort to participate in the gaiety. We were a long time at the table, and when we arose the guests immediately took leave, and Nina conducted me to my suite of apartments, consisting of bed, dressing and bath rooms, furnished with faultless taste. I laid aside my dress for one of dove-colored satin. While Nina was arranging my hair, which she insisted on doing, the door opened, and Celeste entered. She approached me with a wondering face.

"They would not let me go to the saloon, Signorina," she said, "they said papa was being married to you—is it true? Are you my mamma now?"

I smiled, and bent down and kissed her.

"I am quite sure it is true, and will you love me the same as ever?"

"Better, if I can, dear Celeste," I answered.

She smiled and clasped my hand, and when Nina would allow me to go, we went down to the saloon together. Claudius, Francisca, and Signora Cornelli, were there. Claudius' face glowed with joy; he seemed too full of happy thoughts to speak. Signora Cornelli was quiet as usual, but, fortunately, Francisca was extravagantly gay, a mood in which I had very rarely seen her; she, and Celeste, who enjoyed fun exceedingly, were the life of the party.

In the evening a large apartment, opposite to the saloon was thrown open, and lighted up, and very soon the guests began to assemble. I wore my bridal dress, without the veil. Francisca was dressed in blue satin, and a wreath of natural roses surrounded her head. The slight fear I had felt, that from the inferior position I had occupied, I should not be well received in these aristocratic circles, was entirely dissipated by the invariable politeness extended to me. It was a novel and brilliant scene to me. The doors of the conservatory, which adjoined the saloon, were opened, and lamps of stained glass, attached to the roof by gilt chains, shone like gems midst the flowers. Those who were weary of dancing wandered here and there or stepped out of the windows, which opened to the floor, on to the terrace, and wines, fruits, and ices, were placed on marble tables, around the rooms.

After twelve o'clock the people gradually dispersed, till all were gone. The music had ceased, Francisca had taken flight. Claudius and I were alone in the saloon; I was wearied, and a feeling of melancholy stole over me. Claudius approached and gently winding his arm around

me, drew me to the window. The soft summer air fanned my brow. I gazed upward at the pure and star-lit heavens.

"My own," he murmured in impassioned accents, "my own precious one at last."

CHAPTER XXXI.

ONE would have supposed that, lifted from dependence, to a position of honor and luxury, I would have been perfectly contented, yet it was not so. Once the Count's wife I devoted myself to his happiness, fully conscious it was but just to perform the duties to which I had willingly bound myself, but though the sense of duty can school words and actions, it cannot stifle thoughts, and it is not in a day that a strong passionate feeling can be uprooted. I was agreeably surprised to find that Francisca and Signora Cornelli yielded me my place in the household without reluctance. Francisca, though sometimes moody and disagreeable, was sufficiently courteous to me to enable us to live in peace. My esteem and affection for Claudius was, of course, increased by the tie that united us, but as I did not feel for him the adoration that blinds us to the faults of its object, I discovered, ere long, that, despite his many noble qualities, he possessed something of the exacting spirit of man toward woman. There were many things he was willing to do himself that he would not allow to me. Though I felt this to be unjust I yielded, as woman must do, or lose the only influence she possesses over the affections; for between the love of man and woman there is a vast difference. A woman's love is entire self-abnegation; however great her

pride and temper, they are conquered by it. Self-love, with man, is always supreme; with that and his warmest affection grown cool, the laws of the land give him entire authority; education teaches that it is his right; woman is so utterly dependent in her position, that she has no resource, and must submit. These are general reflections, the result of my observation, and only in a small degree applicable to Claudius. There were few who possessed a nobler character. His foibles were those of his sex, his virtues were his own.

Almost every evening, for a fortnight after my marriage, Claudius, Francisca, and myself, attended some ball or reception, or went to the opera. In the morning I superintended the household, and rode out on horseback. I could not but be flattered to see him always happy, to mark his tender glance follow me, even in the most brilliant assemblies.

In my letter to Estelle I had asked her to write me some days before she left England, and tell me in what ship she would sail. I was now daily expecting a letter from her. With what joy I thought of beholding her once more, she would supply all that was wanting in my heart; in anticipating her wishes, in rendering her happy I should become so myself.

One morning, sitting in my dressing-room, Pedro brought me a letter, post-marked England, and directed in her hand. I opened it with a beating heart. Thus it ran,

“DEAR IRENE,

Need I tell you how happy I am, at the unexpected fortune that has raised you to the position for which you are so fitted, or what deep and heart-felt thanks I return to your noble husband for his unanimous offer to me, but though it may seem strange to you, dear sister, I have decided to remain in my present position for another quarter. My pupils are attached to me, and I am not unhappy here, now that habit has reconciled me to it. Three months will soon pass and then I trust we shall see each other again. Dear, beloved sister, you cannot know how I long to see you. Blessings on you, and on your noble husband. Patience, Irene, and adieu for a little while.

Ever sincerely Yours,

ESTELLE.”

August 30th, 18—.

I dropped the letter on the floor, and burst into tears; astonishment, disappointment and grief entirely overcame me. What a contrast was this ambiguous, incomprehensible letter to what I had expected; what could it mean? Had she ceased to love me, or was it pride that actuated her—pride toward me! impossible; then to what should I attribute it. I rang, and when the servant answered I sent for Claudius. He came immediately, and seeing my tears, said anxiously,

“Why, Irene, dearest, what has happened? What is the matter?” I gave him the letter.

“I am completely bewildered, Claudius,” I said; “I can make nothing of it.”

He sat down by me, and read it to the end, then after a short, thoughtful silence, he said,

“There is but one explanation of this, that I can think of. She may, like yourself, have met some one that she loves and who loves her, and is going to marry; or it may be—” He checked himself, and looked disturbed. I did not guess his thought. His suggestion was reasonable, but I still felt deeply pained and disappointed.

“Why should she not have confided all to me?” I said, drying my tears from my cheeks with a long sigh.


“Young hearts are timid. I think it would be well to write and tell her what you have guessed, this will pave the way to confidence, doubtless she will confess all to you. There is no occasion for sorrow; if she marries, she shall come and pay us a visit, or we will go to England to see her.”

“I have dreamed so much of the happiness I should enjoy with her,” I said, sadly, “and now all my hopes are frustrated.”

“We must resign ourselves to what is inevitable, and

nothing is more so, than that, sooner or later, we forget home affections, in the all-engrossing passion."

I took Claudius' advice, and that very day answered Estelle's letter. I reproached her for her want of frankness, and told her if a more passionate feeling than her love for me filled her heart, she would find me at least, always a tender and sympathizing friend. The letter dispatched, calmer thoughts came. I summoned all my philosophy to my aid, and looking into my own heart, and remembering the past, I acknowledged the truth of Claudius' remark that these things are indeed inevitable.



CHAPTER XXXIV.

A WEEK had gone. One morning we were at breakfast, Francisca had just quitted the table. Claudius was looking over his letters. Perceiving the post-mark of Turin on one of them, he quickly opened, and read it. As he did so his color changed, he looked surprised, and annoyed.

“Is anything the matter, Claudius?” I asked.

“Come to the library, where we shall not be interrupted, Irene, I wish to read you this, he said, rising. I followed him up stairs. We entered the library, he closed the door, and walking to and fro, remained silent for a moment, while I seated myself in an arm-chair, and prepared to listen. Turning to me, he said,

“Irene, you know that I have supposed that Francisca and Giorani Cellini were to be married. I have not heard from him since his departure; now listen to this—

MY DEAR COUNT GIOLAMO—

The severe illness of my father, which, happily, has safely terminated, has prevented me from writing you on the very important subject which drew me to Florence. I shall enter upon it now without hesitation or preface, knowing as I do that your opinions coincide with my own; I do, however, most truly regret that it is my fate to be the first to announce to you that the partial engagement between Signorina Francisca and myself cannot be fulfilled, since I should only be able to give her my hand, without my love. When we met I saw and appreciated her intellect, grace, and beauty, but the undefinable something requisite for love was wanting—nay, more than this, my friend, I now love another. I was on the point of explaining my

feelings and sentiments to you, when I was summoned away in haste. I trust, and on my honor I believe, that your daughter feels for me only friendship, and never did I utter to her a word that expressed more. I know that I am acting in sincerity, but the thought of wounding her pride grieves me. I would far rather take the position of the rejected one. I beg you to conceal this from her, and simply say, that for family reasons the match must be broken off. I shall see you ere long, and explain more fully the causes that oblige me, as much in justice to her as myself, to refuse the honor of her hand.

Your Friend, sincerely,

GIORANI CELLINI.

"I confess honestly," resumed Claudius, "that I am not so much astonished at this as disappointed and troubled. You may imagine how many reasons I have for regretting this termination to my matrimonial prospect."

My heart beat wildly, thoughts chased each other rapidly through my mind. My first emotion was joy, that he was not to wed Francisca ; not that I disliked her. I had always dreaded his return, and being forced to witness their happiness. He loved another, this love was as sudden as had been mine for him. Claudius interrupted these reflections.

"I do not blame him ; I have no right to do so ; I know well that feelings cannot be controlled, but I regret it exceedingly. I think I will take his advice and tell Francisca nothing about this letter. She would never forgive such a wound to her pride. She admires, and likes him, but I hardly think loves him ; at any rate, she loves herself too well to break her heart for any one. I will say that it is my wish that the matter should end ; she will never know anything of this, and it will be all well."

In spite of the emotions the letter had awakened, I preserved an outward composure, and answered that I entirely agreed that this would be the wisest course. We decided that he should seek an early opportunity, to tell Francisca to think no more of Cellini, and inform me how she received the command.

On the evening of the next day, we were going to the opera. As soon as I was attired, Claudius joined me at the door of my dressing-room, and we descended to the saloon. Francisca had not yet appeared. Claudius wound his arm around me, and as we slowly paced to and fro he said,

"This afternoon, I asked Francisca, very gravely, if she was, in reality, engaged to Count Giorani. She strove, as usual, to evade the question, but I insisted on a positive answer, and finally, wrung from her a reluctant negative.

"I am very glad of it," I said, "for I desire that henceforward you think of him only as a friend."

"I have never thought of him in any other way," she replied, coldly, "but what is the matter? you were so anxious that we should like each other and marry."

"I have changed my mind," I answered, "and I am glad to find that you coincide with my wishes."

She said no more, and the subject dropped. Nothing, however, can be known from Francisca's manner, her pride masks her feelings completely; she may feel more than she is willing to evince, though I trust not.

The entrance of Francisca put an end to the conversation, and we departed for the opera. I observed her narrowly that night, but there was not a shade of thought or sadness on her face, or in her manner. I could not prevent my thoughts from reverting to Giorani—let me confess all, though the consciousness of duty restrained my feelings, still deep in my heart the fire smouldered, and could not be extinguished. Often I became melancholy at the thought that it was not in my power to reciprocate Claudius' entire devotion.

Another letter came from Estelle. She wrote almost incoherent; not confessing that she loved, or intended to marry, but repeated that she wished to remain in England for

three months, and that at the expiration of that time she hoped to see me. She had already given me the reasons that induced her to act thus, she said. (Poor child, she had explained nothing.) She assured me of her unchanged affection, and reiterated this throughout the letter, which was almost illegible with blots, and written in a strange, rambling style, that filled me with sorrowful misgivings. Claudius tried to console me, as he best could.

"You cannot force confidence, dearest," he said, and we must wait with patience for time to solve the mystery of her actions."

This inexplicable affair caused me many bitter tears. It is a hard task for a restless, longing heart to learn patience.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CLAUDIUS was constantly proposing some amusement to dissipate my sadness. Some days after the incidents I have just related, it was arranged that we should make a visit to Count Foresti, who was Claudius' dearest friend, and also a distant relative. He was a widower, and childless, and lived alone, in a beautiful villa, four or five miles distant. We were to start at five, dine with Count Foresti without ceremony, and return early, for it was one of our reception evenings.

I had been sad, and languid all day, and when I went to my room to dress I felt as if I would have given all the treasures of the world for an hour of silence and solitude. I commenced my toilet, but the idea of joining in a conversation, of being gay, was so insupportably disgusting, that I hastily decided not to go.

"Stay, Nina," I said, as she was arranging my hair, "I am not well, I cannot go. Ring the bell, and bid Pedro tell Count Giolamo that I wish to see him."

She obeyed, and in a few moments Claudius appeared.

"I feel indisposed, Claudius," I said, approaching him, indeed, I should be entirely out of place in any society at this moment. A little repose will perhaps restore me for the reception this evening. You and Francisca go without me."

"By no means," he said, "if you are unwell, Irene, I will send an excuse, and defer the visit till some other day."

"I beg that you will not do so, Claudius," I replied, "you know well that Francisca will be offended if the visit is relinquished on my account. I pray you to go, I shall be better when you return; I ask you as a favor, not to refuse me."

He was still reluctant, but I was so urgent, that he at last consented. I saw him from my window, descend the steps with Francisca, and walk down the long avenue. Several times he turned to kiss his hand to me, then they got into the carriage and were gone.

I threw on a silk dressing gown, smoothed my hair, and went to the library. I loved this place, that seemed pervaded by the elevating influence of intellect, where one could be silent and alone without feeling solitary, for here were constant friends, genial though unobtrusive companions, the thoughts of great spirits. But on that day I was too listless to seek amusement from any source. I sat down in a fauteuil by one of the open windows, and gazing at the smiling landscape, sank into thought.

What is it, I asked myself, that renders me happy? is it position, wealth? no, for I possess them, and am not any more contented, than when a child I wandered with my poor father, who sleeps far away. Is it the toils and struggles of ambition, in some degree to those whose natures are unsuited for it, but can even that satisfy the cravings of our nature? no, no, I feel it cannot. What were the conquerer's crown, the poet's and artist's inspiration, but for the reward of their labors, the sympathy of a congenial mind, and the love of a noble heart.

The mellow glow of sunset fell upon the scene, and found me still absorbed in this train of thought, seated with my

back to the door, bracing my elbows on the arm of the chair. and supporting my head with my hand, my eyes dwelt abstractedly on the gorgeous-hued clouds. Suddenly a step made me start and turn. Conceive if possible, my amazement and confusion when, within two feet of me I beheld Giorani Cellini. I felt the blood rush in a torrent to my face, and recede to my heart. Shaken by an indescribable agitation I arose and muttered something unintelligible.

"Ah! Signorina," he said, his harmonious voice vibrating with joyful emotion, and advancing eagerly, took my hand in both his own, "by what fortunate chance do I find you here. Ah! how happy—how happy I am to see you again."

My emotion and bewilderment increased by the warmth of his greeting, and I stammered,

"I am very, very sorry Signor, that the Count is from home, but——"

"It does not matter," he interrupted quickly, "it is true I came hither expecting to find the Count, intending to confide all to him, believing that his generous nature would enable him to be my friend, notwithstanding the peculiar circumstances of the case and because also I knew not how else to obtain access to you. Imagine, then, my delight at finding you here alone, by some strange but happy mistake. surely, surely, he added in a low and earnest voice, "you do not need to be informed of what brings me hither."

"I do not need to be informed of what brings you hither!" I repeated wonderingly. "Signor I do not understand you,"

"Do not—do not say so, Irene," he said, pressing my hand, which he still retained, with great emotion. "It cannot be that you did not guess what my eyes, my manner, all save words declared. Though you may not know the cause that sealed my lips, it is impossible that you should be

ignorant that I love you. I have sacrificed every worldly and family interest, to be able to tell you so with honor. Pardon my vanity, I believed that I was beloved."

I despair of giving you any idea of my emotions, as I listened to these words. I stood like a statue silently gazing at him.

"Ah!" he resumed fervently, with his beautiful eyes bent tenderly on me, "if you knew what efforts it cost me to repress my feelings, when we were alone—to see your adorable beauty, and be compelled to remain silent. Tell me, Irene, that I have not deceived myself, that I am dear to you."

I tore my hand from him, and clasping my whirling head, I cried,

"For God's sake, do not tell me this, you will drive me mad," and I assure you I do not exaggerate in saying, that for a few moments I felt as if deprived of my reason.

"What is the matter?" he said, in accents of astonishment. "What have I said to agitate you thus?"

"Oh! Giorani," I said, in agony, "why did you not tell me that you loved me—why did you not give me some little word or sign—oh, it is too late, too late now—there is an insurmountable obstacle."

"What obstacle, dearest Irene? I have written to the Count, and entirely freed myself from the Countess Francisca. He is too just to blame me for the course I have pursued. What is there to oppose our happiness, if indeed you love me?"

"From me—from me comes the obstacle, Giorani; I am married."

He drew back, and became lividly pale.

"Married!" he repeated with an emotion that shook his whole frame. "Great God! what do you tell me, am I dreaming—oh! it is impossible—impossible."

"It is true," I replied, despairingly, "I am married to Count Giolamo."

He covered his face with his hands, and sank upon a chair so profoundly agitated that he could not support himself.

"It is all over," he said, bitterly, "the dream is finished. Oh, Irene, if you loved me how could you act thus?"

I turned my head away in silence; in doing so, glancing mechanically out of the window, I perceived the Count's carriage at a little distance.

"Go, go, Giorani," I cried distractedly, "the Count and Francisca are coming; if they find you here, and see this agitation what will be the consequence? go, I implore you, for my sake."

He arose mournfully.

"One moment, Irene," he said, as I made a movement to hasten his departure, "grant me the poor consolation of hearing this mystery explained. I have a key of the garden gate and one of the conservatory, meet me there to night at twelve o'clock—will you come?"

"Yes, I will, at one I will be there." He rushed from the room, and I flew to my chamber, locked the door, and throwing myself on a lounge, buried my face in its cushions.

There are feelings, which words cannot describe; one must be under the influence of a passion as intense, and be placed in the same position, to comprehend the keen anxiety I suffered. It was the bitter, because unavailing, grief of one who has unconsciously had in their possession an inestimable treasure, and only becomes aware that it has been theirs, when it is inevitably lost. Tears would have relieved me but they came not to my eyes. I mutely endured the mental agony, which is far more difficult to bear than the severest physical pain.

Some one tried to enter. and finding the door fastened,

knocked gently ; in an instant the idea of the reception flashed into my mind. If I said I was ill, and could not attend it, Claudius would close his doors to visitors, and perhaps, in his anxiety, remain with me till after the time I had appointed to meet Giorani ; no, I must dress, and conceal my aching heart by smiles ; I came to this determination in a moment, and rising, went to the door ; it was Claudius. Night had fallen, and thanks to the obscurity of the room, he could not perceive any alteration in my appearance.

"What ! in darkness, Irene?" he said entering, "are you then ill?"

"No," I answered, "I am going to send for lights, and dress immediately."

"Dinner will soon be ready. We did not dine at the Count's, I could not be happy without my Irene. I told him we would defer it till some day when she could enliven us with her presence.

"Thank you for thinking of me," I said, with a sense of shame and remorse, "I will dress and join you at once."

He left me, and I rang for Nina ; she brought lights, and I commenced to dress.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

NINA adorned my hair with bunches of rose-colored and white camellias, in the midst of which she arranged some diamond ornaments, that shone like drops of dew upon the lovely blossoms. I put on a dress of rose-colored silk, with a low corsage, and trimmed with flowers and white Brussels lace. This pretty, gay attire, contrasted strangely with my heavy eyes, and deeply sad face, from which every trace of color had vanished.

"Mi ladi is so pale," Nina said, "if she would only put on a little rouge."

"I think I will, Nina," I replied, "get some from my dressing table."

She obeyed, and a little, skillfully applied, restored some life to my face.

I descended to the saloon where I found Claudius and Francisca, and we went to dinner. I could eat nothing, and pleaded a head-ache as an excuse for my want of appetite and abstraction. Francisca was never displeased at being allowed to monopolize the conversation, and talked gaily to her father during dinner, and after we returned to the saloon, till our friends began to assemble, and I was obliged to collect my scattered senses, and go about dispensing bows and smiles. How wearily the hours lagged; our visitors seemed interminable that night; as fast as one departed another

came, and it was after twelve before the room was empty. Claudius observed my faltering step and exhausted air.

"Why Irene," he said, "you look really ill, you ought not to have been here this evening; your hand is burning, pray go to rest at once, repose may restore you."

He accompanied me to the door of my chamber, and bade me a tender good night. The door closed after him; I fell into a chair before my toilet, and buried my face in my hands. Why am I thus grieved and distracted, I thought, in bitter self-reproach, am I not the wife of one of the noblest of men. What right had I to make this appointment—what right have I to keep it. If it is not criminal it is at least wrong—I must not, I will not go.

My eyes rested on the little clock standing on a marble slab fastened to the wall, it was on the stroke of one. The current of my thoughts changed—he whom I loved was waiting for me, counting the moments; he was sufficiently unhappy, without being disappointed in the small favor he had craved at my hands, besides I had promised; no—no, it is but justice, it cannot be wrong. It was in giving my hand without my entire love that constituted a culpable action. Thus it is that one false step often places us in a position in which we cannot distinguish between right and wrong.

The minutes flew on—it was half past one, impelled by an irresistible impulse, I stole into the hall; the villa was wrapt in silence; I cautiously descended the stairs, traversed the saloon with light and rapid steps, and entered the conservatory. The lights were extinguished, but the moonbeams poured in the long windows, upon the marble floor. Giorani was standing in the shadow of the low arching door, he sprang forward, impetuously seized my hand and drew me to one of the windows.

"Bless you for coming," he said fervently, "I have been waiting so long."

"I am here," I answered, leaning against the framework of the window for support, "though perhaps I ought not to have come, but no matter, let us speak quickly, I entreat you. I am already terrified at this clandestine proceeding ; if we should be seen or heard no one would believe in my innocence."

"Come this way behind the shrubbery, there is no other window—now it is impossible to be seen or heard."

He had taken my hand to guide me to the spot, and still retained it in his own, I hastily withdrew it, he sighed deeply and said,

"Irene, I never dreamed that the Count loved you ; did you know it—were you betrothed to him when I first saw you, or did it all happen after my departure?"

"When you were here I had not the slightest idea of the Count's love. It was some days after you left that he declared it to me, I was convinced that you loved Francisca, I knew that your marriage with her was desired by both your families, and believed it was already arranged ; you left me without a word, how could I know that you loved me ? I was a lonely and unhappy being, the kind, generous Count, for whom I felt esteem and sisterly regard, offered me the love and protection I so much needed. I flattered myself that time would conquer my affection for you, I accepted, and we were married almost immediately. This is the history of my actions, and their motives, but my feelings and sufferings—oh ! Giorani, it would take me hours to detail them to you."

"When I came here, Irene, I was in some degree bound to Francisca, and the match was in every worldly respect desired ; I admired her as an attractive woman of society, but your intellect, beauty, and grace, won my ardent love ;

the freshness of your feeling, the unaffected truth and innocence of your character, refreshed my mind, wearied with the stupidity and falsity of conventional beings. In your society I felt again the forgotten aspirations of early youth. I had loved many times before, but never with such earnestness, but all, save Francisca herself, believed that I would wed her, and I could not, in honor, breathe a word of love to you till my position was properly understood. The circumstances were so peculiar and painful that I was for a time at a loss how to act; at length I decided to tell the Count all, with entire frankness. At this moment I was summoned to attend, as I supposed, a dying father; in my anxiety I thought of nothing else, and hastened away. As soon as my father was convalescent I wrote to the Count, cancelling forever all obligation to Francisca—but doubtless you have seen the letter. Very soon after I hastened hither, yesterday I arrived, and sent a note to the Count, informing him that I desired a private interview with him to-day, and that if he would be alone in the library at five, I would enter the villa by the private door, and find my way to the library unannounced, for I wished every one, except himself, ignorant of my visit; I received no answer, but attributing it to some mistake, and exceedingly anxious to see him, I came this afternoon, and was fortunate enough to enter the private door, of which I had a key, and gain the library without being seen. Ah! you know my joy at finding you, and the misery of learning that you were lost to me; but, beloved one, there is some consolation in the midst of so much wretchedness, in hearing from your own lips that you did love me—no, that you do still—is it so Irene?"

"Do I love you, Giorani?" I cried with a burst of uncontrollable emotion, "do I love you? Would to God I did not, since we are inevitably separated on this earth."

"Why—why should it be so, Irene?" he said, in a low and tremulous voice, "nothing should sunder two fervent souls; whatever the world may say, marriage without the sanction of our hearts is an unconsecrated bond; act as though no such tie bound you—be mine. Come with me—you are my life, my soul; do not condemn me to live without seeing you. If my love can content you we will leave society, for I am weary of it; we will seek some blessed retirement, where we shall find ineffable happiness."

He uttered this almost incoherently, and terrified at the seductive thoughts his dangerous words awakened, I shrank back.

"Oh! leave Giorani?" I cried, "what do you say? don't, for pity sake—to what would you lead me?"

"Think what felicity would be ours," he continued, passionately, without heeding me, and striving to clasp my trembling hands.

"Irene, I love you—I adore you—come with me—let us never, never separate."

Carried away by the bewildering passion his words had aroused, seized with a sort of delirium, I forgot everything, and sprang forward to throw myself in his arms. In doing so my sudden motion threw from the bosom of my dress the little locket containing my father's hair; secured from falling by the chain about my neck, it swang before me. The sight restored my reason; like a reproach from another world it fell upon my heart; my long restrained tears flowed fast. Claspings it in my hands, I said, in a faltering voice, Giorani, my father's last words to me were,

"Always be honorable and virtuous;" you have nearly caused me to forget them, and I silently wept.

He did not speak, and when I looked at him, he was as pale as the marble stand against which he leaned.

"This is not a question of the laws of society, Giorani," I said, sadly, "it is not a question of the marriage ceremonial. It is that we have no right to break our plighted word, voluntarily given, without cause or excuse. No right to betray a sacred trust. I was not forced to this marriage, I entered into it willingly; it is true, it was a fatal mistake, but have I the right to punish others for that? The Count idolizes me. I have solemnly given myself to him, and rather than render an innocent being unhappy, I will sacrifice myself a thousand times."

"You are right," he answered, mournfully, "I was mad; I would have betrayed one who has always been my friend. Pardon me; I am very wretched."

The struggle between love and duty, under such strange circumstances, had been so great that mental and physical strength were fast abandoning me; with a great effort, I said,

"Let this painful interview terminate. We have said all—we know all."

"It is true, words are vain," he replied, and walked to the door; I followed him.

"It is, perhaps for forever that I bid you farewell, Irene," he said, in a broken voice, and extended his arms to me.

"No—no," I said, repulsing him, with outstretched hands, "I dare not—I cannot endure more. God bless you! Farewell."

"Farewell," he repeated, and the door shut after him.

Everything was growing dark around me. I clung to the lattice work that supported some plants. I felt that it

might be dangerous to lose consciousness in this place— if I could only gain my room, I thought. I took two or three steps forward—reeled, lost my balance, and fell fainting to the ground.

CHAPTER XXXV.

WHEN I recovered my senses I was lying where I had fallen. I arose and hastened to my chamber, undressed and threw myself on my bed, and, completely exhausted, soon sank into a heavy sleep.

Morning found me with a fever, and for a week I was unable to leave my bed. Claudius watched over me with a tenderness that caused me many self-upbraidings, though I had wronged him only in my thoughts, which it is not given us to control.

When I became well enough to reflect, Giorani's visit seemed to me like a strange fatality. How extraordinary that his note to Claudius should never have reached its destination, that I should have been alone in the library on that evening, and he able to enter and leave the villa unperceived.

After every violent emotion succeeds a calm, but that which follows grief is a silent melancholy still more oppressive. It is like the tranquility of those dark and stagnant waters, whose unruffled surface no storm disturbs, no sun beam ever breaks. It was thus I felt; it banished light from my smile, and elasticity from my step, and added to it was the reproach of my conscience for having deceived a trusting heart. Better, I said to myself, to have remained forever poor and retained the candour of my soul.

Probably Claudius attributed the change in me to my

anxiety for Estelle, but he only manifested his observance of it by the solicitude with which he strove to cheer and amuse me.

Days came and went, but brought no letter from the sister to whom my heart still fondly clung. I wrote to her anxiously, and begged if she retained any affection for me to tell me the reasons of her conduct, whatever they might be.

Time elapsed, my letter remained unanswered, and I was half distracted.

Claudius, I said to him one day, the best thing I can do is to go to England. I have neglected my duty in remaining so long in this uncertainty, Estelle has always regarded me more as a mother than a sister, it is my duty to watch over her. Alas! I have selfishly forgotten that.

"I do not see, Irene, why you accuse yourself. You have done all you could. She is a woman, and if she did not choose to accept your offer you could not force her to do so."

No, but if I could see her—clasp her in my arms once more, she would tell me everything, but here, so far away, I can exert no influence. Oh! indeed I must go—I cannot bear this suspense.

"Be calm, dear Irene, and take my advice on one point, — all the rest shall be as you wish. Write to the lady in — whose family your sister is governess, and ask if she is ill — and as soon as we receive an answer we will start for Eng — land. Does this content you?"

Yes, thank you a thousand times, I answered, gratefully. I did this at once, comforting myself with the reflection that I should now very soon know something definite.

CHAPTER XXXVI

TIME passed. It was the end of October, and the weather, though unusually warm for the season, was enchanting. For some time after my indisposition Claudius and I had abandoned our horseback excursions, but as he was a fine horseman, and fond of the exercise, and the air among the mountains so delightful after the sun began to decline, he persuaded me to resume them. Francisca, who rode with grace and fearlessness, frequently accompanied us.

At the close of a very hot day, we all mounted our horses and took a mountainous road, that commanded a fine view of the city. Claudius, proud of his daring horsemanship, rode a fiery dapple grey, but fearful for those he loved, he had selected Francisca's horse and mine, for their gentleness. Our spirits were exhilarated by the exercise, and sometimes racing, and sometimes talking animatedly, we rode on for a considerable distance.

The sun had long since set, twilight was deepening into night, but night is never entire darkness in Italy; thanks to the resplendent firmament, and we often prolonged our rides by moonlight, to contemplate the scenery sleeping in its soft radiance. We were walking our horses; suddenly, Francisca interrupting herself in the midst of a lively remark, reined up, and said, pointing to the horizon with her whip, "See father, there is a tremendous thunder storm rising, we had better return at once."


I looked in the direction she indicated, and beheld masses of angry clouds fast overspreading the azure sky. Claudius checked his horse, and I mine.

"It has risen almost instantaneously," he said, "we must turn and ride fast, or we shall not escape, it approaches rapidly."

While he spoke the thunder reverberated amidst the hills that encompassed us, and a vivid flash of lightning made my horse start. We wheeled and urged our horses into a quick gallop. In two or three minutes the rain began to descend in large drops, and soon poured in torrents; it grew so intensely dark that I could not see a step before me, save when the lightning lit up the scene with a momentary, blinding glare. I was greatly terrified, and clung to Claudius' arm from my saddle.

"Do not be frightened, there is no danger, I know every step of the road. Give me your bridle, give me yours Francisca, I can guide the horses—faster—let them feel the whip."

Frightened by the lightning and smarting from the lash the animals sprang forward with frantic speed. The storm lulled for a moment and then a peal of thunder seemed to shake the very earth. By the dazzling play of the lightning I saw Claudius' horse rear and plunge. My own became unmanageable and, to my unutterable consternation I felt his hand relinquish my rein, and I was borne onward with the fleetness of the wind. I shrieked, "Claudius!" "Francisca!" and strove to stop my horse, but my efforts only increased his pace, and no voice replied to me. Almost fainting, it was with the greatest difficulty I kept my seat. I clung to the horse's neck and trusted to his instinct to take the road to the villa. I was not deceived for in a few minutes, by a flash from the heavens I perceived it in the distance. As I



approached I saw several of our servants bearing lights, standing without the gate, and gazing anxiously up and down the road. The moment they heard the clatter of my horse's hoofs they rushed forward, stopped him, and assisted me, drenched and trembling, to the ground.

"Blessed saints," exclaimed old Pedro in great alarm, "has anything happened to the Count and my lady Francisca?"

"My horse ran away with me, I know not what has become of the Count and the Countess Francisca. Go instantly to seek them, all of you. You, Pedro, and two or three more take the road over the mountain and let the others go by the lower road. It was about three miles distant that I was separated from them."

They were off before I had finished speaking, and holding up my dripping garments, I ran up the avenue and steps on to the terrace. Signora Cornelli was standing in the open door.

"What is the matter, Irene? Has any accident happened. Where are Claudius and Francisca?"

"Oh! Signora, I do not know. I have sent the servants in search of them. I am very—very grateful," and I related to her how we had been parted.

"I have been in the greatest alarm ever since the storm commenced," she said, "I knew your horses would be unmanageable in the darkness, and with such dreadful lightning. May the virgin bring them safely home."

Too anxious to speak, I stood on the wet terrace, straining my ears to catch a sound. It had ceased to rain, the clouds were breaking away, and showing the brilliant stars. Nearly an hour had passed, when I heard a horse coming at a walk, and soon distinguished lights moving slowly toward the villa. They stopped before the gate, and I saw two

servants leading a horse, upon which Francisca was seated. They threw away their lights and bore her up the avenue in their arms.

Nothing has happened to mi lady Francisca," they cried out to us, "she has only fainted."

They carried her into the saloon, and laid her on a couch. Her long, loosened hair, and her riding dress were dripping with rain.

"Your master, where is he?" I cried agitatedly.

"We don't know, mi ladi; we found mi ladi Francisca on the lower road. She told us, that not knowing where she was in the darkness, and finding her horse frightened, and obstinate, she stopped to wait till the storm should be over, or some one come from the villa. Just before we got here mi ladi fainted."

"Well go now at once to the other road, and see if there is any sign of Pedro, or any of the rest."

They departed; Signora attended to Francisca, and I resumed my station on the terrace. For another half hour I gazed in the direction from which they were to come. Suddenly lights appeared on the summit of the little hill, and moved forward with a measured motion. My heart beat with dread as they neared the villa—I saw no horse. They entered the gate; I perceived that they bore a burden. In insufferable anxiety I ran down the steps to meet them. Their arms were formed into a sort of litter, on which they supported the form of Claudius. His eyes were closed, his face ashy pale, and blood flowing slowly from a large wound near the right temple. I uttered a loud cry, and exclaimed, wildly,

"Merciful God! he is dead."

"No, no, mi ladi," said Pedro, who sustained his master's head, "he is not dead. His horse threw him

half way down a rocky hill, and there we found him senseless."

"Carry him to his chamber, Pedro, and then hasten to the city for a physician," I said, in spite of my agitation, retaining presence of mind."

The sound of our voices reached Signora Cornelli, and Francisca, who had revived, and they rushed out. Beholding the unconscious and bleeding form of her father, Francisca acted as though reason had forsaken her.

"Oh he is dead! I know it, I feel it," she cried, bending over him, and obliging the servants to stop. "What a fatal day; why did we go out; where did you find him; how could it happen?" she added incoherently to those around.

"Francisca," I said, drawing her away, "if you value your father's life let them hasten for assistance; every moment that you detain them makes the matter worse."

She allowed the servants to pass on, and followed. They gently laid Claudius on his bed, and then quitted the room, I having again urged Pedro to go with all possible speed for the physician."

"Mi ladi," the faithful old man replied, "I will take the fastest horse in the stable, if it breaks my neck."

I knelt by the bed, and bathed Claudius' hands with camphor, while Francisca, and Signora Cornelli tried to make him inhale some powerful salts, but he continued to lie immovable, and the only signs of life was his almost imperceptible breathing.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

It was not many minutes ere the door opened, and Pedro ushered in the Count's physician. He was an old man, with an amiable face, and the grave but gentle manner, inestimable in one of his profession. He saluted us, and came to the bed-side, and after feeling Claudius' pulse for a moment, took a vial from his pocket and poured some liquid into his mouth, then he proceeded to examine the wound on his head. I drew aside, and buried my face in the bed-clothes, in aching anxiety.

"Signor," said Francisca, in a trembling voice, "is he dangerously injured?"

"Patience, my dear Signorina," answered the doctor in a low voice.

No one spoke for some moments, then the doctor bent toward me, and said,

"Excuse me, is this the Countess de Giolamo?"

"It is, Signor," I replied, lifting my head, "Oh! tell me," I added, earnestly, "is the wound upon his head dangerous?"

"It is serious, Signorina, but there are internal injuries still more so."

He said this in a confident tone that gave me a pang.

"Oh my poor father," murmured Francisca, and she began to weep bitterly. Signora Cornelli had sank into a chair, as pale as marble.

The doctor placed a chair by the side of the bed, and sat down ; from time to time he poured some drops into Claudius' mouth, till at last he moved, unclosed his eyes, and his glance, restless, and without intelligence, roamed around the room.

"It is as I feared," whispered the doctor to me, "he has not recovered his reason."

In a moment Claudius' eyes closed again, and he lay silent as before.

"Irene," said Signora Cornelli, "come to me an instant, I wish to speak to you."

I went to her.

"Irene," she said, in a low voice, and the tears flowing from her eyes, "I believe the doctor thinks Claudius will die. Ask him, my dear child, because if this is fatal we must send instantly for a priest, and have extreme unction administered. My poor brother, he has been very remiss in attending to his religious duties of late years."

I almost withered with the pain her words caused me.

"Oh! Signora, what reason have you to think this—don't, I beg; even if it were so, he has not his senses, of what use would be a priest?"

"Irene," she replied, in as severe a tone as one as mild as she could speak, "I think you are not a Catholic, but I believe you are a Christian, you surely believe in spiritual ministry to the dying."

"I cannot see the use," I said, "of calling to counsel, and petition for the dying, those who may be no better than themselves, for we are all mortal—all alike fallible."

At this moment the door opened, and I beheld Celeste ; she looked like a spirit with her white night dress, and flowing hair. We ran to her.

"Oh! mamma," she cried, (by this endearing name

she had called me since my marriage,) is papa indeed killed?"

"My dear child," I said, "your father is ill, if you come in and disturb him he may die, if you will quickly return to bed you will find him better in the morning."

I forced myself to speak very firmly; she looked into my face with an expression of great alarm, and obeyed without a word. The poor Signora had not been able to speak to the child.

I closed the door, and returned to kneel by the bedside. Francisca, who had been standing on the other side of the bed, weeping convulsively, approached and knelt beside me. Signora Cornelli leaned on the foot of the bedstead, and a mournful silence reigned for some moments, till finding I did not comply with her wish and question the physician, Signora spoke herself.

"I implore you, Signor to tell me frankly, if my poor brother will die," she said in a faltering tone.

"God alone knows the result, Signora, but to speak to you truly, since you ask it, his condition at this moment almost precludes hope."

Francisca uttered an exclamation of grief, and Signora said in great agitation,

"Then signor, I had better send at once for the holy father.

"I advise that you wait a little while, Signora, it is barely possible that a favorable change may occur."

A multitude of wretched, heart-sickening thoughts crowded upon me. Oh! at such an hour; if the heart possesses any sensibility, and we have ever wronged, by a word or a thought, the being about to depart from earth, what a gnawing pain is self-reproach. At that moment my

involuntary love for another seemed a great crime. I gazed with agony on that pale face, and gently taking his listless hand remorsefully kissed it. Suddenly, without motion or sound, he opened his eyes and looked intently at me; his gaze was calm and conscious; and a faint doubting hope returned to me.

"Claudius, do you know me?" I murmured.

Twice his lips parted but no sound came forth. He indicated by a movement that he wished to be raised. The physician, anticipating us, sprang to his assistance, and supported him to a sitting posture. His eyes wandered for a moment and then rested on a writing desk, standing upon a table.

"Do you want that desk, Claudius? shall I bring it to you?"

He shook his head, "no."

"There is something in it for some of us—is it for me, dear father?" said Francisca through her tears.

"No," again.

"Is it for me, Claudius?"

He bowed his head, "yes."

"Do you wish me to see it now?"

"No—" His head fell back, and the physician gently replaced him on his pillow.

"Oh! is there no hope? Can nothing be done?" cried Francisca wildly.

"Do not, my dear Signorina—do not agitate his last moments," said the doctor sadly, in a low tone, and by a sign, imperceptible to Claudius, he told Signora Cornelli it was time to summon the priest; and the poor woman, bathed in tears, hastened from the room. Claudius was evidently sensible of all. His face expressed grief and suffering. With a great effort he extended his hands to us and as we

clasped them, his eyes beaming with ineffable tenderness, rested on Francisca for a moment, and then dwelt on me, till the light faded—a heavy shadow swept over the face—the spirit passed away like a subtle essence unperceived.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

I WAS tearless and must have seemed naturally calm—in truth, I felt strangely nerved. There was a deep, silent gloom upon me. I sat motionless by the bed while all the household were aroused and in the greatest grief and confusion. I saw Signora Cornelli lead Francisca from the room, and the physician gently urged me to take some rest, but I told him I needed none.

Ere long Signora returned followed by a priest, who knelt by the bed; and she coming to me begged that I would join in their devotion. I knelt mechanically, but their murmured prayers had no share in my thoughts. When they had finished Signora tried to persuade me to go to bed, but I refused, and one after another they quitted the room. Morning broke, and found me alone—alone with the dead.

Vainly beyond the tomb religion opens the gates of heaven to faith—vainly philosophy reasons and skepticism scoffs; to the intellectual mind death remains always unalterably awful. It is not alone the melancholy fate that awaits this earthly form, which we so love and cherish; it is the dread mystery and uncertainty that veils the future. The soul is lost in contemplating eternity—seized with a shuddering, nameless horror, at the idea of annihilation, and in the despairing despondency of these thoughts, when everlasting existence seems incomprehensible, aimless, and wearisome, and to cease to exist, unendurably dreadful, we find it in our heart to exclaim, “Better, better that I had never been.”

There is but one thing that can console at such a moment, an exalted conception of, and an infinite trust in the Deity.

So deeply did I feel the truth of this, that still upon my knees, I rested my arms upon the bed, and my head upon them, and my spirit breathed this fervent aspiration :

"Oh source of all knowledge and power, enlighten my ignorance, tranquilize my fearful, doubting heart."

I remained for a long time absorbed. When I raised my head I beheld, with great surprise, the good old Count Foresti standing opposite to me, and gazing upon the inanimate form of his friend, with tears slowly stealing down his cheeks.

"Ah! my friend," I said, sadly, "by what chance are you here?"

"By accident, only," he replied in a voice choked with emotion, "I passed last night in the city, and returning home this morning I met the physician, who informed me of this sudden and dreadful event. Ah! my poor child, it is you who feel it—you who knew so well how to appreciate his noble heart, you whom he so tenderly loved."

"It seems like a strange terrible dream," I said, rising, "yesterday he was so well—so happy, and now he lies there dead."

The Count sighed profoundly, and turning from his mournful contemplation, approached and took my hand.

"My child," he said, you look ill, you should have gone to rest. Have not Signora and Francisca done so?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Why did you not also do so? you were very wrong; your eyes have a strange lustre, your cheeks are crimson, and your hands are burning with fever, indeed you are very ill."

It was true, all energy had abandoned me; by turns burning and shivering, I could hardly stand.

"I beg you to allow me to ring for your maid, and go at once to rest," said the Count, pulling the bell without waiting for my permission; as he did so the door opened and Pedro entered, bearing a letter on a salver.

"I beg mi ladi's pardon," he said, hesitatingly, "perhaps it is wrong to bring this now, but as it is from England, and marked very important I thought——"

"Yes, yes, you were right; give it to me," I said, eagerly, he put it into my hand, I walked a little aside, and opened it. It was in an unknown hand, and my head was swimming so violently that it was with difficulty that I read the following lines——

"To THE COUNTESS DE GIOLAMO :

In reply to your ladyship's communication inquiring of the health of Miss Estelle Stuart, your ladyship's sister, I regret to say that she left us more than a month since, we supposed to join your ladyship. She was then in excellent health. Since that time we have not the slightest knowledge of her.

Very respectfully,

MARY ASHTON."

"Oh! my God," I cried in heart-broken accents, "everything comes at once to overwhelm me. What have I done to merit such calamities."

"Is there then a new misfortune?" said the Count anxiously.

"My sister—my only loved sister has gone, no one knows whither, but I will go instantly to England, I will find her if I have to seek all over the world."

"Be calm. Where do they think she has gone?"

"They supposed she was coming to me.

"It may be that adverse winds have detained her at sea—compose yourself."

"No—no; her conduct from the first has been inexplicable.

I must go to England, I ought to have gone long ago;

how many misfortunes might have been avoided if I had done so, but I will go now—this day—this hour. Will you tell me which is the quickest route, and arrange matters for my departure. I am incapable of thinking or acting—my head is bursting.”

“Listen to me a moment. It is impossible that you should travel, or in fact, do anything, in your present condition unless you wish to kill yourself. Go to bed immediately, and when repose has restored you, I will do all that you desire. As your husband’s dearest friend—as your friend, as much for your own sake as for his, I shall assume some authority. Here is Nina—here, conduct your mistress to her room.”

The strength lent me by excitement had passed, and I felt ready to sink. I followed Nina without a word; she undressed and put me in bed as if I were a child, and I soon fell into a heavy sleep.

When I awoke, I was suffocated with fever; luminous rays floated before my eyes, and the bed-clothes, and lace curtains formed themselves into hideous mocking faces. A dull weight pressed upon my brain, and very soon I became entirely delirious. The wet garments, with the distraction mind, and the great mental suffering I had endured, brought on a violent brain fever, and for three weeks, they afterwards told me my life was almost despaired of. In my delirium I raved incessantly of the events of that dreadful night. Signora Cornelli was my nurse, and I believe it was to her patient faithful care that I owed my life. She was one of those beings whose virtues are seldom appreciated, because they are so quiet and unostentatious; in the days of health and happiness she would not be sought for, because she possessed no brilliant talent to enable her to shine; no power of eloquently pouring forth her feelings; all her

merit consisted in her sincere, unselfish goodness of heart. Exceedingly religious, I must have appeared to her criminally regardless of the rites she held most sacred, and yet had I been one of the most devout of her creed, she could not have tended me with more affectionate interest. The good Count Foresti, too, came every day to inquire after me. As soon as I became convalescent I returned my warmest thanks to those kind friends. Signora bore her brother's loss with resignation, she had known sorrow before, and it is the first time of everything in this world, that we feel most intensely. Francisca had truly loved her father, and his death was an irreparable misfortune for her. She had never before shed tears of unavailing grief, and seeing her somber dress, and subdued manner, her fair hair brushed plainly from her pale, sad face, my heart warmed with sympathy and affection for her. And to Celeste, she whose life had been as joyous as a summer's day, passed in gathering flowers, how sad was the absence of her father's tender words, and fond indulgence ; how dreary the gloom that had fallen over everything.

When I became sufficiently well to leave my bed, I examined the desk which Claudius had designated to me in his dying moments. I found among papers of trifling importance, a letter, sealed and directed to me. I opened it without being able to form the vaguest idea of what it contained. It bore the date of the earliest days of my marriage. Thus it ran :

" If this ever meets your eyes, my beloved Irene, it will be when I shall have ceased to live on this earth, save in the memories of those who love me.

It is, perhaps, strange that in these happy days—truly, the happiest I have ever passed, that I should pen these lines for your perusal in case I should be suddenly summoned from the world ; but I no longer possess the buoyant hopefulness of youth, and nature has wisely ordered that as we grow older the thought of the possibility of death is ever present.

Sometimes, Irene, I think it was selfish to link your fate with mine ;

it would have been better to have acted toward you as a father, for it may be that your fresh young heart does not find perfect congeniality with my gravity and wordly experience. If then, I should be the first to be called from life—which, in the course of human events is probable—let no exaggerated constancy make you a victim to my memory. I feel that to your self-sacrificing character these words are not unnecessary. If in after years you should find that the feeling you bore to me was cold compared to that some other inspires, then think of me as a father—a brother—anything that was dear to you, and to whom your happiness was inestimable.

I have made my will, and endeavored to be just. Francisca and Celeste inherit large fortunes from their mother ; I have therefore left them only a remembrance of their father, and the bulk of my fortune to you. Even at this your wealth will not equal theirs. I trust it may be many years ere these matters will need to be referred to—but I leave that to the dispensation of the great Father of the universe.

Ever your own,

CLAUDIUS DE GIOLAMO.

I wept bitterly over that letter. Poor Claudius—kind generous nature, it must have been a mournful presentiment that dictated those lines.

Very shortly after the will was opened and read. There were the legacies to Francisca and Celeste, of which the letter had spoken, one to Signora Cornelli, and some smaller ones to faithful servants, the rest of the large fortune was mine. Francisca seemed neither surprised or displeased at her father's disposition of his property, indeed I think she had foreseen it.

With returning health came insufferable longing to learn the fate of Estelle. I resolved to depart for England as soon as possible. When I communicated my determination to the Count, he said,

“My child, I have no ties to detain me here ; I am an old man, and a relation of your husband, I will accompany you. It would seem strange to see one of your youth, and beauty, and rank, traveling entirely alone.”

I accepted this kind offer with many thanks, and announced my intention to Francisca and Signora ; the former said at once,

"I will also go with you, Irene. I think a change may be of service to me. Everything keeps alive my sorrow.

"And what is to become of Celeste?" asked Signora, smiling.

"Can you not remain here till our return?" inquired Francisca.

"No, I am a social being, and do not like solitude. If you are really serious, I will take Celeste, and go to stay with my sister, at Piza, until your return."

Francisca was quite in earnest, and it was settled according to Signora's proposition. We only waited until I should regain strength for the land journey. At last, one morning in the beginning of December, we entered a carriage, with fast horses, and soon lost sight of the towers and domes of Florence.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ONCE more in crowded, stirring London; once more beneath the sky so dull and cold compared to the glowing heaven of Italy. It was but a few months since I had left my native shores, but I had experienced years of emotion.

We took lodgings at a hotel. Francisca, who had never before been in England, went with the Count to visit all places of interest, and I hastened to Mrs. Ashton's only to hear that she knew nothing more than she had already informed me of in her letter. A last hope remained to me. Estelle might have sought Lady Russell's protection from some unaccountable cause. I wrote to her ladyship, and briefly alluding to my altered circumstances, spoke of Estelle's singular conduct, and mysterious disappearance, and begged if she had any knowledge of her to rid my bitter anxiety. Somewhat to my surprise she answered my note personally. She was extremely gracious, and overpowered me with compliments, calling me "her dear Countess," and congratulating me a thousand times on my good fortune. She said she deeply regretted that she was unable to relieve my suspense but she knew nothing of Estelle's movements, and had only seen her once or twice after my departure for Florence. She was so intent on saying agreeable things, that she almost forgot to lament the Counts death. If I had not been so deeply saddened, I might have felt amused, as it was I was only disgusted at

her want of heart and sincerity. Conscious, however, that little as I esteemed her character, I was still under obligations to her, I received and responded with politeness to her professions of friendship.

Count Foresti ascertained for me that all ships bound for Leghorn for three months back had arrived at the port safely and in due time ; and finding myself baffled in obtaining even a trace of Estelle, I began to despair.

"My child," said the Count, "there is not the slightest doubt in my mind of the fate of your sister. She has eloped with some one and taken every precaution that her route might not be discovered. This total abandonment, this indifference to the pain she must know that you suffer, is to say the least, ungrateful, but it would really seem that at certain times in our lives we are seized with delirium, that weakens all previous feelings, and overthrows all preformed resolutions. I trust all may be well with her ; but at any rate whatever may be the reason of her silence, sooner or later reason will return to her, and then, depend on it, she will write to you."

I relied much on the Count's judgment, for I knew that he had great experience and knowledge of human nature.

Francisca was already weary of London, there was no longer anything to keep us there, and the Count proposed that we should turn homeward.

"Indeed," said Francisca in answer to this, "I dread the idea of going home ; I prefer even this sky and this fog ; I am restless, and I would like to be constantly on the wing. Let us go to Brussels."

"My dear Francisca," replied the Count, "what motive have we for going there ?"

"Let us go as pilgrims in search of happiness," she answered with a sad smile.

Happiness—is not all our life a pilgrimage in search of it? Are we not ever allured by some bright dream till the last beating of the heart is still?

I had as little inclination to return to Florence as Francisca, and we easily persuaded the good Count to agree to our wishes. Francisca wrote to Signora that she would take a flight all over the continent before she would have the pleasure of seeing us again. I also wrote a few sad words telling her of the failure of all my efforts to discover Estelle, and then we departed.

CHAPTER XL.

WE passed the winter in Brussels. Francisca availed herself of every opportunity of amusement that presented itself, but I, absorbed in deep, bitter melancholy, buried myself in profound seclusion. Sometimes I strove to find consolation in thinking of Giorani's love but then my doubting heart whispered, "perhaps he no longer loves me."

In the spring we went to Vienna, and after sojourning there a few weeks, to the lovely Geneva of Switzerland. I shall not pause to speak of the beauty and sublimity of the scenery, for which this country is world-renowned. In fact, at that time my mind was too pre-occupied to appreciate its grandeur.

We proposed spending the summer here, and accordingly settled ourselves comfortably in a furnished cottage, which we hired of an English gentleman, who had been residing in Geneva, and was about to return to his native country.

Time wore away, I scarcely knew how. One day Francisca was in my room, and happened to observe standing on a table, the desk which contained Claudius' last letter to me,

"What have you in this Irene?" she asked, turning the key, and opening the desk.

"Some papers and letters of the Count's" I responded.

"Will you allow me to look over them."

"Certainly, only be pleased to take good care of it, as a sacred memento."

"I will be sure to do so," she said, and took it away with her.

Some time after, I was drawing, and finding that I had lent Francisca a pencil, which I needed, I went to her room to get it; she was not there, and seeing the pencil on a table, I picked it up, and was about to withdraw, when on the same table I perceived my desk open, and, lying conspicuously above the other letters, one postmarked Turin. Instantly it occurred to me that it was the letter Giorani had written Claudius, declining Francisca's hand. I opened it in great alarm; yes, it was indeed so. Deprecating my carelessness in giving the desk into Francisca's hands without having examined its contents, but with a faint hope that this might have escaped her eyes, I carried it to my room and immediately destroyed it. Some days after, she returned the desk to me, with thanks, saying that she had found a letter from her mother to her father, and had kept it.

"You were quite right in doing so." I felt sure from her manner that she had not read Giorani's letter.

On a lovely evening in July, the Count, and myself were returning from a ramble amidst the mountains. Within a few steps of our door, the Count, remembering that this was the hour of an engagement with an Italian friend, begged me to excuse him, and left me.

Walking slowly toward the house I fixed my eyes abstractedly on the figure of a gentleman advancing toward me; as we neared each other, I almost screamed with surprise on recognizing Giorani. In a moment my hands were locked in his, and both uttering incoherent exclamations of joy. I drew him into the house, and then into the parlor—quite English enough to be called so—and closed the door.

I was so filled with sudden transport that I could not speak, and he so joyfully agitated that he could only press

my hands passionately to his lips, and murmur in a faltering voice,

"Irene, Irene."

"Ah! what a strange and happy meeting," I said at last, "the first moment of joy I have known for many weary months."

He gently seated me on a lounge, and sat down by me.

"It must be a blessed destiny that thus brings us together," he said, "oh, I have so ardently desired to see you—or at least to hear from you, yet I have restrained my impatience. I have said to myself, that I must not forget in my impetuous love to mourn the melancholy fate of a good man, and respect his memory."

I was so overcome with sad emotion, and sad memories that I covered my face with my hands and wept.

"I know your generous heart must feel deeply, but Irene, you have done——"

"Ah, Giorani, you cannot know what I have suffered; sometimes I have had a dreadful thought; it seemed to me that in my great love for you I could not truly regret the Count's death; and yet the grief I felt, the tears I shed, were real; but it is easy to deceive ourselves, and very—very difficult to analyze our own hearts."

"Irene," he said, with his dear eyes bent on me, and tenderly clasping my hand, "you have nothing to accuse yourself of; in a moment of the greatest trial and temptation you resisted bravely—nobly—you acted not like even a good woman, because good women have sometimes succumbed to temptation, but like an angel. Had I not for a moment lost my reason I should never thus have tried you, but you did not fall into the fatal fallacy, that one wrong justifies another. Be contented then—do not exaggerate into crimes, involuntary thoughts, and feelings."

His words calmed, and his presence consoled me. I dried my tears, and sighing, told him of my great sorrow for Estelle, of this he was entirely ignorant, he could only bid me be patient and hope, and then after a pause, he said,

"And now, Irene, I can ask you if you love me, without interfering with any one's happiness."

"Do you think that I have changed," I answered, "when you have seen me flushed, trembling, speechless, on beholding you? No Giorani, I loved you when I first saw you—I love you now, I shall ever love you. I know it is not well for a woman to confess her love thus frankly, but I believe you are not like others, and when the heart is overflowing the lips cannot be silent; and now do you love me—will you ever love me?"

"To my latest breath I will adore you; I have sought the world over and never found your equal. Precious one—tell me how long we must be separated—how long before we may devote our lives to each other?"

Poor Claudius has been dead almost a year, Giorani, let us wait another, I owe at least this to his memory, from gratitude for his great love for me."

"Oh it will be a long, long time to live without seeing you."

"No, if we have faith in our love, we shall be able to be contented without being so entirely happy as to forget poor Claudius."

"You are right; I will resign myself. Shall we correspond, Irene?"

"Surely—and look forward with ineffable joy to the time when we shall meet again."

"Is it not a proof, Irene, that I lose my reason when I see you, that I have never thought to ask who is with you here?"

"Claudius' old friend, Count Foresti, and Francisca."

"Francisca! and are you friends?"

"We are intimate companions, and though some peculiar traits in her character forbid me to love her, I am truly her friend because she is Claudius' child."

"Irene, if I remain in Geneva even a few days, and visit you, Francisca will guess all the past, and though for my part I do not care, yet as you purpose living with her for some time to come, it is best that it should be concealed from her; this knowledge would engender bitter feelings that might render you very unhappy. Will it not be wisest that I should leave at once; tell me—it is for you that I speak—if you say stay, I remain; if you wish me to go, I depart."

"I see, Giorani, that your departure will be the most prudent course, not only for the reason you have mentioned but because after seeing you for a few days, the consolation of your presence would become indispensable to me."

"I go then, beloved; I go to dream of our future," he said, rising, and, drawing me to him, he pressed me with fervor to his heart.

I forgot the past; and thought not of the future, I felt only that his arms encircled me—that his soul-lit face was beaming on me; my head sank upon his bosom, and with a thrill, from head to foot, my lips met his, a long rapturous kiss—my first kiss of love—and then, still clasped by his caressing arm, he led me to the door. Suddenly he started slightly, and looking toward the windows that opened into the garden, exclaimed,

"What is that?"

"What, Giorani?"

"Strange—it has gone. I saw, or thought I saw a face pressed against the glass, and the moment I spoke, it disappeared."

"You must have imagined it; I saw nothing."

"It may be, but it was strange; I trust it was not Francisca."

"No matter; at this distance it would be impossible to recognize you, or overhear our conversation."

"Well, it is no great consequence. Were it your wish I would at this moment declare my love before the world. Adieu, my Irene—my beautiful, loved one, adieu."

He held me again to his heart. I timidly linked my hands around his neck, and said,

"Never, never cease to love me, Giorani; believe me, bereft of your affection, my life would be as desolate as these mountains wrapped in eternal snows."

"My Irene, my every thought is yours; I could not forget you if I would. Adieu—you shall hear from me in a few days."

It was childish, perhaps, well, it was the promptings of a woman's fondness—I ran rapidly to my room, and from the window, which commanded an extended view, watched him till a turn in the road hid him from sight.

He walked quickly, and did not pause to look back, it was a little thing but it impressed me sadly; even his warm, devoted nature could not reach that life within another's which is woman's love.

CHAPTER XLI.

I MET Francisca and the Count at tea—we were living in English style—and she inquired if we had enjoyed our walk, in a natural cordial manner which dispelled my slight suspicion that she had been the person Giorani had seen at the window.

“Yes,” said the Count, answering for me, “we had a pleasant stroll and among other agreeable things (but this to myself only) whom do you suppose, Francisca, I had the pleasure of meeting this afternoon?”

“I really have no idea,” she replied.

“Your old friend, Signor Cellini. I stopped and shook hands with him. I do not know any man I like and esteem so much. He is so intellectual and possesses such a frank, honorable character. I asked him to come and see us, certain you would be pleased to meet him, but he told me that he leaves in the morning for Paris, and should be engaged this evening.”

“He is a very elegant, fascinating person,” said Francisca coolly, taking the cup of tea I passed her with an unsteady hand.

“The only thing I ever saw in Claudius that appeared like caprice or inconsistency,” said the Count to me in a low voice, after we had gone to the parlor, “was his breaking the engagement between Francisca and Cellini—so many times had he said to me, that he loved him as a son and

desired nothing more than to see him united to her—and then, without assigning any reason, to put an end to the matter—it was a most extraordinary thing.”

I answered that people sometimes acted unaccountably, and then hastily changed the subject.

I treasured every word of the happy interview that had restored to me the sweet solace of hope. But for the thought of Estelle, my long harassed mind would have been at peace.

When I received a letter from Giorani he was at Paris. “I shall not linger here,” he wrote; “this is a fine place for the gay; but I am satiated with worldly pleasures, and only travel to while away the days till we may meet again.

I am going to Spain, the only civilized country in Europe I have never visited.

I read his dear letter over and over and answered at once. In his next he bade me direct to Barcelona, and a long time passed before I heard from him again.

As the cool weather advanced the Count became impatient to return home,

“My dear Countess,” he said to me one day, with comic gravity, “I am at a loss what to do with you and Francisca. Here we have been wandering for nearly a year, and you are still bent on continuing. Well may poor Signora ask if we ever intend to return. For myself, I am an old man and have naturally lost my taste for roaming, and I have never found a place that suited me as well as Florence.”

“My good friend,” I replied, “it is quite impossible that I should content myself to return and settle quietly, having learned nothing of my unfortunate sister.”

“And do you purpose traveling till you find her. You may seek the world over in vain.”

“That is true, but you must remember, that if she still

be in existence, there is a possibility of encountering her in traveling, and we are quite sure that we shall never discover her in Florence."

"As usual, you overcome me with your arguments; well I consent to one more move provided it be the last, till we wend our way back; and now where are we going?"

"Francisca desires to visit Berlin; it is a fine gay city; you and she may amuse yourselves, while I pray that kind fortune may throw Estelle in my path."

"To Berlin then, since it is so agreed," said he laughing, and as was his custom, after our discussions, he took his hat and disappeared.

CHAPTER XLII.

ONE morning, after a long journey, finding myself in Berlin, I could not but be amused at the entire want of system in our travels, but it was explained in the restless, impulsive feelings that had dictated them.

Berlin is a magnificent city, full of objects of attraction to the stranger. I went with Francisca and the Count to all the public places, concluding that thus, more opportunities would be afforded me of seeing or hearing of Estelle, but never, midst the crowds, did my anxious gaze rest on her form, or aught like it—never, save in my dreams, did I behold her seraphic face.

Two letters from Giorani, one from Barcelona, the other from Cadiz, were forwarded to me from Geneva.

He wrote me at great length, describing all he had seen. He spoke of the beauty of the Spanish women, and added,

“But do not fear that their black and sparkling orbs can ever make me forget the violet eyes of my beloved.”

To love, and have faith that we are loved, if indeed it be a dream, what an entrancing one it is.

We had been in Berlin long enough for Francisca to weary of ‘sight seeing,’ when one morning the Count entered my apartment, and said.

“I have a commission to intrust to you, Countess, will you accept it?”

“Certainly, with the greatest pleasure, what is it?”

"I learned by chance, through my valet, that in the house of an acquaintance he has picked up since we have been here, a woman who keeps a poor lodging house, there is a female lying ill, and entirely without means. I think he said she was French. The woman told him, that from compassion she had not sent her to the hospital, but that her own poverty would soon oblige her to do so. Knowing how charitable you are, I confide to you the task of relieving this unfortunate being."

"And where is she to be found?"

"This is the address; I would accompany you, but women know best how to manage these things."

That afternoon I wrapped myself in my cloak and furs, for it was very cold, put on my bonnet, and taking a purse of money, for the benefit of the poor creature I was going to see, got into a carriage I had ordered, and drove to the number of the street written on the paper the Count had given me. It was a narrow dirty lane, house miserably old and gloomy. I alighted, and after telling the coachman to wait for me, went to the door and knocked with the heavy rapper.

An ugly, wretchedly dressed little girl opened it.

"I wish to see the sick woman who lodges here, my child." I said.

She shook her head, and murmured something in German, of which I did not understand a word, then making me a sign to wait, she vanished, and in a moment re-appeared, followed by a woman, with a kind though vulgar face. I repeated to her in French what I said to the child, she understood, and answered in the same language.

"Madame wishes to see that woman!" she said, with a look of surprise, "well, go right up stairs to the front room in the first story."

I groped my way up the dark stairs, found the door, and knocked gently, no one answered, and after waiting a moment I entered.

It was a large room, dingy red curtains falling over the windows darkened it to obscurity; a torn and faded carpet covered the floor; here and there stood a chair, and a few logs burned upon the hearth. On a bed standing out in the room, with its head against the wall, reclined the figure of a woman, the head thrown back, and the face turned away.

With a sense of gloom, and some dim association of the past in my mind, I walked softly to one of the windows, drew back the curtain, and then approached the bed. A mass of unbound hair flowed like waves of molten gold over the side, almost to the floor. I bent down to look at the face. Great God! it seemed to me for a moment my heart ceased beating—another fearful look—yes—yes! it was her—it was Estelle. Clasp^{ing} her in my arms, I cried with streaming tears,

“Oh Estelle! Estelle!—my sister, is it indeed you?”

With a violent start she awoke, and sprang up.

“Ah! what is it—who are you?” she exclaimed, looking wildly at me.

“It is I, Estelle; it is Irene.”

She uttered a loud cry, and threw herself into my arms—once more I held her to my heart—God bless her—once more.

Presently she drew herself from my embrace, and covered her face.

“Oh! why are you here, Irene,” she murmured, “I had hoped to die alone, and that you might be forever ignorant of my fate.”

“Do you say this Estelle, when my whole soul expands

with the unexpected joy of beholding you after such long, long absence. Ah! at sight of you all my tender love revives, you again become all in all to me, as you were when we parted."

Tenderness conquered her pride, she wound her arms around my neck.

"Do you forgive my cruel, wicked desertion, Irene."

"Hush—I no longer remember it, I only know that I have found you—that nothing shall separate us again.

"Take off your bonnet, Irene, and let me look at you."

I did so, and seated myself on the edge of the bed.

"Ah! she said, taking my face between her hands, and tenderly kissing it, "I never expected those dear beautiful eyes to smile on me again. It may be that God sends you to console my last moments."

"Don't, don't speak of death, my beloved, you will live many, many happy years."

She sighed heavily, and sinking upon her pillow closed her eyes, and motioned me not to speak. I sadly remarked the great change in her, she looked years older, and her form had lost all its exquisite roundness, but her face, spite of its palor and expression of suffering, still retained its ideal beauty. Soon the tears stole from beneath her eyelids, she covered her face with her hands, and deep sobs heaved her bosom.

"Do not weep, Estelle; if you knew how happy I am—what a weight is lifted from my soul, you would not. What matters the past, we are together at last. Henceforth it shall be my duty and pleasure to restore health and hope to you—be cheered. Come we will go to my hotel. But stay, I forgot; are you able to go, dear one? will not the exposure to the cold increase your illness?"

"Do not fear," she replied, brushing away her tears,

"nothing in this world can retard or hasten the progress of my malady."

"Do not speak so sadly—I will not listen. Where are your clothes, let me get them."

She took a key from under her pillow, and gave it to me.

"That trunk," she said, pointing to it, "contains all I possess."

Night was fast gathering, I hastened to unlock it. There was a coarse straw bonnet, trimmed with blue ribbon, an old black silk dress, a few undergarments, and a pair of slippers. I carried them to the bed, assisted her to rise, and dressed her as though she had been a child. She had hardly strength to stand, and her air was so perfectly inanimate that only her large unnaturally brilliant eyes gave life to her appearance. I twisted up her splendid hair, and tied on the bonnet, then taking off the large black velvet cloak I wore, I wrapped her in its heavy folds.

"Now, dear one," I said, seating her on the bed, "remain here one moment while I go to pay the woman—then we will leave this wretched place."

I descended the stairs, knocked and called till the woman I had seen appeared.

"This lady is going away with me," I said, "how much does she owe you?"

She named the sum. I took several pieces of gold from my purse and gave them to her.

"This is much more than is due you," I said, "but no matter, you have been kind to this lady, keep it and be discreet and silent."

Without stopping to hear her thanks and exclamations of wonder, I returned to Estelle.

"Come," I said, "all is ready, let us go."

She rose, and leaning on me, we went down and entered

the carriage. I supported her all the way in my arms. We drove to the private door of the hotel, and I hurried with her to my apartments. She sank into a fauteuil. I closed the door, and exclaimed,

"God be thanked! I have you here safely at last. Oh, Estelle, if I could see you smile—hear one word of joy, I should be the happiest being the earth holds up."

"Do not believe that I do not love you, and rejoice at beholding you," she answered, "but you do not know how ill I am—for months I have not uttered as many words as I have spoken to you."

I knelt by her and removed her bonnet.

"Ah! that beautiful golden hair," I said, fondly kissing it, "you are changed, Estelle, but you have not lost that, so lovely it is, as golden as the autumn sunlight in Italy."

She smiled faintly and her head dropped upon my shoulder.

"I shall send at once for a physician, then," as she shook her head, "you will take some refreshment—let me get you something."

"No, dear Irene, I have come like my poor father to desire nothing but rest."

"Not even my love, Estelle?"

"Ah! yes, always that," she said earnestly, "though I am unworthy of it, Irene."

"Come, you shall go to bed immediately; I know that the excitement of this meeting has exhausted you."

I led her to my bed-room and helped her to undress. When I saw her with her long white night dress and sunny head lying down in my bed as in the old school days, I almost thought it must be some dear dream. I sat by her till her sighs grew fainter and fainter, and like a tired child she slept, and then, too happy to remain quiet, I wandered

back to the drawing-room. I was so unaccustomed to joy that it almost bewildered me. I would not admit a foreboding thought—my tender care and love would restore Estelle, the future would make amends for the past. I was pacing the floor, wreathing bright hopes, when there was a knock at the door, I opened it. It was the good Count.

"Ah, my dear child," he said, "you stayed so long that I was anxious about you. What detained you? Did you find the woman?"

I seized both his hands, and drew him into the room.

"Oh, my friend," I said, "I bless and thank you a thousand, thousand times—you have restored my sister to me."

"I!" he cried in astonishment; "that woman was"——

"Estelle—I brought her home with me, and she is sleeping there at this moment."

"Let us thank Almighty God," he said reverentially, "surely his hand has guided you; and was there no one with her."

"No one."

"Where has she been? what has happened to her?"

"Oh! I never thought to ask; it is sufficient that she lives—that I have her. Oh, Count! I watched over her when an infant—she never knew any other mother. She stood with me beside our father's dying bed, and for so many years we were each other's life. To find her after such a dreadful separation makes me giddy with joy. I have suffered so much, but God is good. I shall be happy at last."

"No one deserves happiness more," he said, warmly. "Good night, my dear child, I am impatient to tell Francisca the news, I am certain she will be rejoiced"

He left me and I went back to my chamber, and silently unrobed. My soul elevated itself, for a moment, to the

Great Power from which all things emanate, and then I laid softly down, and fell asleep with my arm around her, as I had so often done in the times that were gone.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE next morning, unknown to Estelle, I sent for a physician, and as soon as he arrived, told her what I had done, and begged that she would see him, and listen to his advice. I found her willing, and when he entered, she replied to his suggestions, and consented to take whatever he thought proper to prescribe. After the visit was over I followed him into the drawing-room, and eagerly questioned him as to the nature of Estelle's illness.

"I find no special disease," he answered, "only a general prostration of the nervous system, and want of vitality, arising, I think, from great depression of spirits. I advise you to induce her to rise from the bed, and endeavor in every way to arouse, and divert her mind; as soon as she recovers a healthful tone of feeling, physical strength will return to her."

I hastened to repeat this to Estelle.

"Dear one," I said "if you will rise, and wrap yourself in a dressing gown, and sit in this comfortable fauteuil, by and by, if you wish, I will bring, and introduce to you, Countess Francisca, and Count Foresti; they desire very much to see you."

"Who are they, Irene? Ah!" she added, abruptly, "I did not observe your mourning dress—where is your husband?"

"He has been dead a year, Estelle," I answered, the tears gushing to my eyes.

"Dead!—that noble man—poor sister, you too have had sorrow."

"Bitter sorrow—but let us not speak of it, now—I wish to cheer, not sadden you. To answer your question, the Countess Francisca is my poor husband's daughter, and the Count Foresti, his dearest friend ; do you wish to know them ?"

"No, Irene, they would be but strange, indifferent beings to me, and I an object of pity to them. In all the world there is but one dear, familiar face to me, and that is yours—let me see it ever near me, but not strangers."

"It shall be just as you please ; but you will sit up dear, it seems to me while I see you lying there, that you are fatally ill."

"Not to-day, dear Irene ; to-morrow. Sit by me—talk to me ; for nearly two years your voice has been a stranger to my ears"

"I will do all that you wish, if you will only grant me one thing. Banish from your mind every painful recollection. Will you strive to do so, for my sake ?"

"Yes, for your sake, I will do it," she answered. Still, for many days, it was the same 'to-morrow, dear Irene,' but at last she yielded to my entreaties, and I saw her slight form almost buried in the large fauteuil, but yet the languid head reclined, and the radiant eyes were fixed on vacancy, as though the shadows of the past moved before her.

Alas ! the outward change was but the type of the inward. It seemed as if she had bidden adieu to the world, and lived only in memory, while waiting the barge that should waft her from the shores of life, into the silent sea that lies beyond.

I was constantly with her, hanging over the chair, or sitting at her feet, and talking always cheerfully, but day after

day came and found her still the same, and as I gazed on her beautiful, fragile form, I involuntarily sighed.

I had intended to remain in Berlin until her health should be somewhat restored, but as it rather declined than improved, I decided to return to Florence if she could bear the fatigue of traveling, and consulted her upon the subject.

"If you wish, dear, I think I am strong enough," she replied.

As she would now unavoidably be thrown, in the society of Francisca and the Count, she agreed that they should be presented to her. Francisca with one of the caprices of her wayward nature, conceived a great liking for Estelle, and extended to her many courteous attentions. The Count acted as usual, with unvarying delicacy and kindness.

And so, by the least wearisome route, we journeyed slowly home. Once more at the dear old villa, affectionately welcomed by the good Signora, and joyfully embraced by Celeste.

CHAPTER XLIV.

IN the tender intimacy of a social circle, surrounded by all the luxuries that wealth procures, and with the intoxicating anticipation of love in the future, how blessed I might have been—but I was not destined to be happy.

All my unceasing efforts to amuse and interest Estelle were utterly unavailing. She faded and grew more and more inanimate. I perceived that I had erred in thinking it would have a salutary effect, never to avert to the past. She remained silent, but no effort of her will could bury in oblivion the sorrow that was consuming her life.

We were alone in my dressing-room one lovely twilight. Insensibly partaking of the serenity of the hour, I had fallen into silence. Suddenly she said in a low voice,

“Irene!”

“Well, dear,” I answered, approaching.

“Do you remember the night before you left England? Something in this scene reminds me of it. How everything has changed, we are scarcely the same beings.” I sat down on a low ottoman by her.

“It is true, Estelle,” I replied, “and it is strange that we are still ignorant of what has happened to each other during our separation, but it is my fault; I have been wrong. Now let us reveal all that has transpired—I will be the first.”

“I have long desired it, Irene; I am listening.”

Then I told her everything, even my temptations, and

struggles ; many times my voice faltered, and when I concluded we were both weeping.

“What fortitude you have had to bear so much, my poor Irene,” she said ; “but you were always stronger and wiser than I. I was not fitted to endure the rough storms of life, they have destroyed me as they do the frail reeds.”

She was thoughtful for a moment, and then, bending nearer to me, her sweet face growing shadowy in the increasing darkness, she commenced to speak in a low and impressive tone,

“I had been at Mrs. Ashton’s about two months, and my days had passed with oppressive monotony, when a Miss James, a sister of Mrs. Ashton, came to pass some time with her. She was a very pretty girl, and was frequently visited by an English gentleman, whose elegant and rather peculiar appearance attracted my attention. He was tall and possessed a fine figure, his hair light brown and complexion fair, and his large blue eyes as dark and soft as yours. His manner was grave and quiet, but full of a charming amiability.

One day, I had just returned with my pupils and their elder brother from a walk in Regent’s Park. In passing the drawing-room, one of the girls remarked that Miss James had borrowed a piece of music from her the night previous, and had not returned it, and requested me to be kind enough to get it. I told her certainly, and went into the drawing-room. I was looking over the carelessly arranged music, when the gentleman of whom I have spoken, entered.

My back was towards him, and mistaking, or pretending to mistake me for Miss James, he addressed me by her name, making some affable remark. I turned in surprise ; he instantly apologized and I quitted the room.

I must grant that I thought a great deal of this trifling occurrence ; he certainly interested me, but as yet it was

only my fancy that was awakened, my heart was not touched.

I always rose early, with the habit acquired at school, and having neither books nor companions to amuse me, generally took a long walk. I had got but a little distance from the house one bright morning, when I heard rapid steps behind me, and a voice said,

‘Miss Stuart.’

I stopped, and looking round beheld him.

‘Pardon the liberty I take in thus addressing you,’ he said in a serious respectful manner, ‘I wish to beg the favor of saying a few words to you.’

‘Sir,’ I answered, blushing and stammering, ‘your request is so singular that I——’

‘Do not be alarmed,’ he said; ‘if you do not wish it, no matter.’

Seeing, with regret, that I had wounded him, I said hastily,

‘Speak to me, sir, if you wish. I am willing.’

‘Thanks,’ he said, and walking on with me, continued,

‘You are right in saying that this is a singular request, but there is a good reason for it. If I should be seen conversing with you at Mrs. Ashton’s it would arouse the envy of those women, cause you many annoyances, and, perhaps, loss of reputation and dismissal, for such people think that governesses have no right with thoughts or wishes beyond their daily bread.’

I made no reply, and he went on in the same abrupt way.

‘What I wish to say to you, Miss Stuart, is simply this, Mrs. Ashton casually mentioned to me that you have but one relative, a sister, who is in Italy; apparently there are none near you to concern themselves in your fate. Your

youth, beauty and loveliness inspire me with a great interest. I desire to offer you my friendship, it may render you happier to feel that there is one to whom you can speak unreservedly, and who will do anything in his power to serve you. Those more worldly and less innocent than yourself, Miss Stuart, might say that this is not proper; but there are positions in life in which it is folly to be trammelled by the conventions of the world, when a frank, generous impulse lifts us above them. Do you not believe me sincere?

‘I do believe, and thank you,’ I replied timidly, but with deep gratitude.

‘And you will permit me to become your friend—remember, I mean *only a friend*.’

‘You would not ask my permission if you knew how highly I should value a true friend?’

‘I will endeavor,’ he said, ‘to be one, and deserve your esteem.’

You, Irene, who understand me so well, will not be astonished, that I implicitly believed all this. Conscious of my own truth and rectitude, I never dreamed of doubting others—assuredly not one who seemed the soul of candor. Yes, in my blind confidence, I thought that an attractive man of thirty-five, and a girl of eighteen could be *friends* and *nothing more*.

His language and manner to me were so perfectly fraternal, that I felt at once at my ease. Before we parted he asked me to allow him to join me in my morning walks, and I consented.

‘I will meet and leave you at a short distance from the house,’ he said, ‘in order that Mrs. Ashton may not discover our intimacy; for should she do so, instead of making your life more endurable, as I wish, I should probably do you an irreparable injury.’

Every day for a month he accompanied me. His mind was of the order that pleased me most, reflective rather than brilliant, and had been cultivated by the best education and much travel; but that which endeared him to me more than all was the almost womanly gentleness of his disposition, redeemed from weakness by a slight but proud reserve that forbade familiarity.

You have loved, Irene, and can comprehend how gradually all my thoughts centered in him. When we separated in the morning, I dreamed all day of our next meeting. I could not be lonely for his image was ever present. A compliment or a word approaching tenderness (and of these he was exceedingly chary,) made my heart beat with joy.

I did not deceive myself. I knew that he was dearer to me than aught else; but the calm, almost cold respect with which he treated me, forbade even the hope that I was loved.

All that I knew in regard to him was this, which he told me with a smile,

‘I think Miss Stuart, you do not know even my name, it is Henry Gordon.’

One morning he looked very sad, and after a long silence said, with an abruptness that startled me.

‘Do you wish to know why I am so thoughtful, Miss Stuart?’

‘Yes,’ I answered.

‘It is because I regret that our pleasant companionship must soon terminate.’

‘Terminate! and why, I pray you?’

‘In a week or ten days, Miss Stuart, I shall leave London.’

I vainly endeavored to conceal the deep grief I felt at this sudden announcement. I could not speak, and hurriedly lowered my veil to hide my tears.

‘Ah! is it possible that you weep for me?’ he said, in a voice the first time tremulous.

‘You are my friend, the only one on earth, save my sister, to whom my life or death is not a matter of entire indifference, can I help mourning that you are to leave me.’

‘Will you go with me, Miss Stuart? Will you become my wife?’

I could not believe him in earnest.

‘Do not jest, I pray you,’ I said, sadly.

‘I never jest, I ask you seriously, if you will be my wife?’

‘Oh! if you are sincere,’ I said, transported with astonishment, and delight, ‘can you doubt my answer.’

A strange offer you will say, unaccompanied by asseverations of love or tender words, but I was contented, and ere long it was difficult to recognize in the enraptured lover the man who had so prosaically asked me to be his.

He told me that day, that our marriage must be kept entirely secret; not only from every one at Mrs. Ashtons, but also from you. I remonstrated against the latter.

‘You do not know what a tender sister she has been to me,’ I said, ‘to deceive her would be basely ungrateful.’

‘I cannot at this moment tell you the urgent reasons I have for this request, but have you not sufficient affection for me to make a small sacrifice, and faith enough to trust in me?’

I still hesitated; a slight cloud of displeasure crossed his usually placid brow, and he coldly averted his eyes. I was conquered in an instant.

‘Be it as you will,’ I said, ‘I will trust in you as I do in heaven.’

A sweet smile thanked and rewarded me, and then he explained his intentions.

‘Berlin is my destination, and I think it is best that our

marriage should be deferred till immediately before our departure. I shall not see you for some days, and meanwhile you will make a few requisite arrangements, and when all is ready I will inform you by a note. Tell me, Estelle, can you confide in me without explanations—can you place your destiny in my hands without fear or doubt?

‘Ah! Henry,’ I said, forgetting all girlish shame in my deep love, ‘there is no room for distrust in my soul. Have I not told you that I would believe you as I do heaven.’

‘Adieu then for a little while, Estelle, soon it will be my Estelle,’ and with a tender glance and gentle pressure of the hand, he left me.

The following day I received your letter telling me of your approaching marriage. In spite of my devotion to him I suffered greatly, and the remembrance of my promise prevented me from disclosing all to you, but resigning myself to the sad necessity. I wrote in answer the strange letter that so perplexed you, and awaited with the greatest impatience the time that should unite me to Henry. Ten long weary days passed before a note came from him. This was it, as nearly as I can recollect,

‘All is prepared, my beloved Estelle; the moment this comes to your hands tell Mrs. Ashton that you intend leaving; she may suppose that you are going to your sister. Day after to-morrow, at ten in the morning I will send a carriage for you, trust the coachman, he will fetch you to me.

Fervently your own.

HENRY GORDON.’

I did exactly as he directed; Mrs. Ashton seemed much astonished, but to my great joy did not even inquire my reason or where I intended to go.

The appointed time came, and the carriage arrived. There was no one to say good-bye to me. I entered it oppressed by a sense of shame, as if I were committing a base action. Ah! the instincts of an innocent nature are infallible truths, and virtues never shroud themselves in mystery.

The coachman drove rapidly to Regent Park, and then checked the horses; suddenly the door opened and Henry leaped in.

'Ah! you are here, my Estelle; it is so long—*so long* since I have seen you,' he said fondly folding me in his arms, and covering my face with kisses.

Blushing, and with a palpitating heart, I withdrew myself. I scarcely knew him for the calm grave being who had appeared insensible to earthly passions.

'Where are we going Henry?'

'To a clergyman's, dear one, that I may gain a legal right to protect you, and then we start at once for Berlin.'

I asked no more; the surety of honorably possessing his love was enough.

The carriage rolled on for some minutes, and stopped at length in a retired quarter of the town, before a plain but pretty house. Henry assisted me out, rang, and we were admitted, and conducted into a parlor. In a moment the clergyman entered; he had evidently expected us, for he held a prayer book in his hand; with a bow and kind smile to me, he opened it, and we stood before him. I answered tranquilly, but Henry was agitated and became alternately red and pale. Our hands were joined, and the benediction pronounced, and I was the wife of Henry Gordon.

From the time I left Mrs. Ashton's till I woke one morning in Berlin, I remember everything as we do a pleasant but confused dream. So many incidents breaking the dull routine of my life had bewildered me.

Henry procured elegant apartments, and though I had never given one thought to the social position he might occupy or the wealth he might possess, I was rather pleased to learn from him that he belonged to an ancient English family, and had ample means at his command. As soon as

we could think of anything save each other I wished to write to you, but he objected.

‘How can you do so without telling her that you are married?’ he said; ‘would she not very naturally ask what you are doing in Berlin. Dear Estelle, I entreat you not to write till our marriage may be divulged.’

‘And when will that be, Henry?’

‘In a short time. Ah! you do not love me, or you would not hesitate.’

I wept; he kissed away my tears, and I yielded.

Ah! vainly should I attempt to paint the extatic happiness of those first days, when he never wearied of saying, or I of hearing the sweet words, ‘I love you;’ and as if to compensate for his former coldness, he lavished on me those endearing names so flattering from the lips of one beloved. I believed myself supremely blest, but unfortunately I worshipped him. Men are seldom grateful for such blind and foolish fondness, and ere long my smiling heaven was overcast. Slowly, very slowly, I began to perceive that he possessed more passion than tenderness; that the amiability which had been his greatest charm for me, was only superficial, and that in his private relations, his temper was violent, haughty, and despotic—always exacting and often unjust. Absolute self-confidence prevented him from seeing his errors, but if it had not, stubborn pride would not have allowed him to acknowledge them.

Do not think that I readily admitted these convictions; I grieved, I struggled against them. I would rather have believed that the fault was mine, but I could not forever close my eyes to the truth. I wished to assert by action or words the liberty which is God’s most precious gift to his creatures; it immediately caused us to disagree, for he expected every one around him to be subordinate to his

will; if I remonstrated and strove to reason, he would instantly leave me with harsh coldness; then agonized at his displeasure, fearing he would cease to love me, I would seek a reconciliation, with bitter tears, and after I had besought as if I had been guilty of some monstrous crime, he would condescend to forgive me, and with a caress, and word of love, efface every painful remembrance. These difficulties were always about trifles, but our every-day life is composed of them, and nothing can be considered unimportant that contributes to make or mar our happiness. At last I submitted entirely; his wishes, even his caprices, became my laws, his smile my heaven, and his frown the only thing I dreaded.

But though I resignedly yielded the blind obedience of slave to master, I was not happy in this love which bound and oppressed me like a chain. I needed one like you, on whose affection I could repose, whose gentle hand would lead, and yet leave me my liberty, and whose superior strength and wisdom would influence me through love, not govern by severe exactions.

Well, six months had gone in this way, I believing the relations we had assumed toward each other were perfectly just and ordained by God. One day, during his absence, I received a letter from England. Let me repeat it to you—every word is indelibly stamped on my memory:

MADAME—

Notwithstanding Mr. Gordon's precautions, the intelligence of his marriage has reached my ears. I cannot but believe you are ignorant, that before he met you he was indissolubly bound to another; ten years ago, in London, he became my husband. I do not desire to revert to the causes that have compelled us to live apart for six years; it is sufficient to inform you that no legal separation has ever taken place, and consequently I am still his wife. I owe it to myself to tell you this, otherwise the validity of my claim to his name might be called in question. Any doubts you may entertain as to the correctness of this, may be solved by addressing a few lines to Bishop M—in London, who consecrated our marriage

IDA GORDON.

Another his wife ! then, oh, my God ! what was I ? I wept and wrung my hands, wild with grief and shame ; how I mourned over my fatal folly.

In the midst of my distraction he returned. My wrongs gave me courage ;

" Sir, I cried, holding the letter before him, " I know all ; you have deceived me—deny it if it is not true."

He became deadly pale, snatched the letter from my hand, and as he read it sank into a chair without a word.

" You say nothing ! it is so, then ! Oh ! could I have dreamed that you whom I thought it would be sacrilege to doubt, could thus infamously deceive me—but my madness is over, and now I will leave you though I know not what will become of me ; I will go even if I die in the streets."

My words and the upbraidings of his own conscience completely subdued him, he approached me with a sad and humble air.

" Will you hear me, Estelle ? he said. " Will you allow me to say a word in my own defence ? that is a privilege accorded to the greatest criminals."

I sat down weeping, he took his place beside me and said,

" I confess that this letter is strictly true ; in the opinion of the world, I am her husband, but not in the eyes of God, nor of enlightened beings. I was young and inexperienced, her beauty attracted me and we were married after a month's acquaintance. Very soon I discovered the painful incongruity in our characters. She was unreasonable and passionate and wanting in the docility that becomes a woman. For four years we led a wretched life ; criminations and recriminations brought matters to a desperate position and we separated. I went abroad, traveled till I was weary and then

restless and unhappy, wandered back to England, and, by accident, met you, Estelle. I swear in the presence of God,' and he fell on his knees before me, 'that in proffering you my friendship I had no sinister designs. I formed the austere resolution of being *truly, disinterestedly* your friend, but involuntarily I grew to love you; I saw that you loved me, that our natures assimilated, I yielded to the irresistible temptation. Oh, Estelle, pardon me in memory of our happy days; have I not in all respects treated you as a wife—am I not here faithful to you? do you not feel that our souls are inextricably united?'

Could I tell him that I felt that there were never two more unsuited, when he was gazing on me with those candid eyes—speaking in those imploring tones? no, my heart relented, I did not withdraw the hands he had taken.

'You will not leave me, Estelle, I cannot live without you—you will not go?'

Oh! shame for my weakness, he seemed again what I had once believed him, I pardoned and forgot everything, and consented to remain.

For a time, while his gratitude lasted, his amiable complacent manner repaid me for all my sacrifices, but by degrees he resumed the old dictatorial tone, and restraint and fear again fell upon me.

By remaining with him, knowing that I was not his wife, I imagined I had placed an eternal barrier between you and myself. I had not the consolation of being able to justify this act in my own eyes, for though my love was unconquerable, I had ceased to respect him, and, as I have told you, he did not render me happy; I became melancholy, and my health failed in wearying, conflicting emotions; after have I lain sleepless, bathing my pillow with tears of regret!

for the weakness that had made me transgress, for one who knew not how to recompense me.

At length I suddenly resolved to secretly fly from him, but whither should I go?—to you? ah, no! after abandoning you with such selfish indifference, should I seek you, a miserable, hopeless being, to solicit your pity? my pride would not permit it. I decided to go to Dresden. I had in my possession a considerable sum of money, and some valuable jewels, dresses, etc. I prepared everything, and waited for a favorable opportunity to escape, conscious that I had not courage to resist his entreaties, if he guessed my intentions.

One morning he told that he was going to ride some miles out of town, to see a gentleman about purchasing some rare pictures, statues, etc., and should not return till evening. This would be an excellent chance, precisely what I had long desired, and yet I never felt more wretched than when he arose to go. He came to me, and carelessly kissing my cheek, said,

‘Good-bye, amuse yourself in my absence.’

‘One moment, Henry—one moment, please,’ I said, detaining him by the arm.

‘What is the matter?’ he said, in surprise.

‘Say good-bye a little more kindly, Henry, as you once used to do.’

‘What a child you are, Estelle, I shall only be absent a few hours.’

Oh! Irene, I thought my heart would break. I looked on him for the last time—ah, me! for the last time on this earth; he knew it not. A slight smile rested on his grave lip, and he playfully shook my hand; I dared not speak, I pressed my lips on his hand, and in my thoughts bade him an eternal adieu.

The moment he was gone, I wrote a few hurried lines telling him that I was about to fly from a life of sin and humiliation, and begged him not to pursue me, then in agitation of mind that approached insanity, I departed.

None, unless they have experienced it, can comprehend the desolate feeling that steals over one, when alone and friendless in a great city and my position was peculiarly lonely; it seemed to me that I possessed not a friend in the wide world. Nature had bestowed on me but little energy, and that was crushed. My affections had been wasted, my self-respect was gone, and I had alienated myself from you; hope was dead within my soul, and health abandoning me without regret.

After passing six weeks in uninterrupted solitude, I saw in a newspaper Henry's name among the arrivals in London, then I returned to Berlin, thinking that the sight of the house where we had lived, the street in which we had walked, would be a kind of companionship for me, sad but sweet. In the post office I found a letter from him.

'In taking this step, Estelle,' he wrote, 'you have acted with cruel injustice, and proved that you have no love for me, therefore I obey your last words, and do not follow you. Forsaken by you, I go to England. I know not your intentions for the future, but I wish to inform you—hoping that by some chance you may receive this—that I leave you unlimited credit on my banker here; I trust that no false pride will prevent you from availing yourself of it. I think you will live to regret what you have done—but no matter.'

It was I who had been treated with cruel injustice, but as I read those lines I felt as if his words were true, and had he been present I believe I should have craved his pardon.

My means were exhausted, and I was soon obliged to apply to the banker, but with a last remnant of pride. I

drew only sufficient for daily expenses, and lived as economically as possible.

A month elapsed, a month of weary days, without occupation or pleasure, and nights of unquiet dreams, or restless thoughts. One morning finding my purse empty, I dressed and went to my bankers. The clerk to whom I applied, said to me, very courteously,

‘I regret madame, that your credit on us must cease for the present, till the will of Mr. Gordon’s heirs be known.’

‘What do you say?’ I exclaimed, looking wildly at him.

He put a paper in my hand, pointing to a paragraph, and I read,

‘HENRY GORDON, Esq., third son of JAMES GORDON, was found dead in his bed while on a visit to his father, in Birmingham. His death is supposed to have been caused by disease of the heart.’

My nerveless hand released the paper, and in an agony I sank half insensible to the floor. Not till that moment did I realize how deathless was the love which reason could neither explain nor justify. They had me conveyed home and I darkened my chamber, and sought my couch; the sight of human faces, the sound of human voices, even the blessed sunlight, was hateful to me. In my great misery death appeared disarmed of all its terrors and wore the aspect of a consoler, and yet I lived, and the daily wants of life obliged me to rise and dispose of all the articles of value I possessed. The lodging I occupied was too expensive for my altered means, and I removed to the comfortable place where you found me. In a short time everything I had possessed was gone, and I was without a penny. I was too ill in body and mind to make any effort to obtain labor by which I might gain a livelihood. Tossing on my hard, narrow bed, I resigned myself with reckless despair to whatever might happen, but fortunately the woman of the

house, though poor, was compassionate and did not permit me to starve.

Human nature is an anomalous incomprehensible thing. Now that Henry was dead I forgot all his injustice, and accused myself of ingratitude, and having caused his death. In the long days and nights of loneliness and torturing thought I remembered that I was not utterly forlorn when he loved me ; and thus prostrated and despairing I was when you came like an angel of peace, to forgive and comfort me."

A long silence succeeded ; such heavy shadows wrapped the room, that I could hardly distinguish the outline of her form. I had listened, holding her hands, and resting my head upon them, thinking with sorrow and bitterness, through all the strange sad history, that it is to the sensibility of their hearts, and their blind credulity, which even experience fails to overcome, that women owe all their misfortunes.

She had spoken slowly, and never once had her voice risen with vehemence or trembled with emotion. The slight animation with which she commenced died into a tone of cold and gloomy monotony as she continued, that sounded to me in the darkness and stillness as inexorable as the voice of fate, saying that joy and hope were not sleeping but utterly dead to her.

At last, striving to dissipate my sad thoughts, I said,

"Forgive ! poor, dear one ; I have nothing to forgive. but comfort ; ah ! yes, God grant that I may be able to do so ; that I may be able to restore to you at least the serenity of our days of girlish innocence, when position was unknown to us. Why should it not be so ? there was a time when we were all-sufficient for each other's happiness ; can it not be so again ? Let us think and speak of the past

only to remember that it has gone, and peace and hope will once more return to you."

"As well could flowers that have been broken and trampled under foot be made to bloom again. But no matter, Irene, why should you grieve; bright days lie before you—and as for me, there is another life, where, I trust, I shall be happier."

My tears fell upon her hands, and feeling, perhaps, that she was speaking cruelly, she drew me to her and laid her cheek to mine and we wept together.

CHAPTER XLV.

It was under the influence of Estelle's narrative that I wrote thus to Giorani, with whom I had continued to correspond regularly : "In order that those bound in indissoluble ties should be happy, it is undoubtedly necessary that they should love ; but it is not enough that they should love as they generally do—the woman with fond submission, and the man with commanding, though it may be tender, affection. It is requisite that the evil spirit of injustice be banished from the heart, and that woman be not deprived because custom sanctions it, the privileges, in one word, the freedom, which man claims for himself. It is requisite that he should renounce the superiority he has arrogated, and that there should be a frank, honorable understanding that no law or custom can authorize one human being to deprive another of just and noble liberty, which is the soul of harmony and the first element of all happiness."

In reply to this Giorani wrote,

"You speak, my Irene, as though you thought that I in common with others would practice this injustice which is all the greater because the laws and custom permit it. Believe me, your opinions on this subject are also my own, and still farther, I believe that man loses by such a course much more than he gains ; for though woman, from her tender and yielding nature continues to love even when oppressed, it cannot be with the truest and most elevated

feeling of which she is capable. Intellect and deep affection are exotic flowers that can only bloom in the warmth and light of unrestraint and high appreciation; and he who imposes restrictions and exacts obedience from a noble, intellectual and loving woman knows not what he sacrifices; instead of an equal companion, whose free courageous mind has ever some bright or inspiring thought to entertain or elevate him; whose *willing* devotion consoles every sorrow and heightens every pleasure, he will have at the best, but a fond, timid child, constrained by self-distrust and the fear of displeasing her lord."

How much more I loved him for these generous sentiments, so rarely met with. In my hopeful and vivid imagination the future smiled like an Eden, where the flowers blossomed, and the joyous birds sang, and love and liberty wandered hand in hand.

CHAPTER XLVI.

SPRING drew slowly on, and oh! how sadly changed it found Estelle. Always drooping in her large fauteuil, by the window, she looked, in her pale shadowy loveliness, like a fading shape of air.

Since my return I had lived in the greatest retirement. Count Foresti, for whom I felt the affection of a daughter was my only visiter. Francisca, tired of the almost conventual solitude and silence, had gone to spend some time with her aunt, in Pisa.

It was the decline of one of the lovely spring days; the warm and perfumed air stole through the open windows of my dressing-room, waving the lace curtains, and lifting Estelle's rich hair. She sat holding a book, but her eyes were fixed on the clouds, with such a far-off look, that I said to her.

"Why do you think so much, Estelle? What occupies your thoughts?"

She turned her eyes on me, those large, beautiful eyes, and answered.

"I was thinking, Irene, of a lonely grave, far away, on which the grass has grown, and the snows lain heavily for many, many years."

"Ah, Estelle, why will you indulge in this profound melancholy. Is there then nothing cheering in the world?"

She sighed, and replied gently,

‘You should not chide me for remembering, Irene. It is only too natural for the living to regret the dead.’

I felt rebuked, and kissed her brow. At this moment I was summoned to the saloon to see the good Count, who had called as usual, to inquire after Estelle’s health. He remained for some time, and after he took leave, Signora Cornelli wished to consult me upon some matters relative to Celeste, and some domestic affairs, and it was after eleven when I returned to my room. Estelle’s chair was vacant, and her book lay on the footstool beside it. Her chamber opened out of the dressing-room on one side, and mine on the other, I was going to see if she was at rest, when Nina appeared on the threshold,

“The Signorina went to bed an hour ago, *mi ladi*,” she said, “I thought I heard her call, and went in, but she is sleeping quietly.”

“Very well, I will not disturb her now; come and help me to undress,” she did so, and then placed the night lamp on a little marble table, lowering the shade, that the light might not annoy me, and was still folding robes, and putting things in their places when I fell asleep.

It must have been two or three hours after, that I awoke, and in a few moments slumbered again, and dreamed that some one was calling me. At first it seemed my father’s voice, then Claudius’, and then Estelle’s, low and plaintively it murmured,

“Irene! Irene!”

I half awoke, and still continued to hear those sounds, dying gradually away, till they ceased. I lay for some moments in this state, between sleeping and waking, and then suddenly aroused myself. All was silent, I sat up in bed, wondering if I had dreamed, or really heard those cries; unable to determine, I arose with a beating heart,

and a strange dread, and taking the lamp, hurried to the dressing-room.

In the middle of the floor a white figure was extended. I rushed to it—heavens! it was Estelle! I knelt and raised her in my arms, uttering exclamations of terror. Her large eyes were open, and floating without life, and the night dress had fallen open on the cold, still bosom, from which animation had *forever* departed. Let me pass over the rest.

* * * * *

In a lovely spot on my own lands, which I had consecrated at great expense, I made her resting place. I reared no tablet to record her name and age, but I enamelled the turf with brightest flowers, as fittest emblems of the grace and beauty that slept beneath. At the rising and setting of the sun, and at the still hour, when only the beaming stars lighted the heavens, I knelt above her, and there, communing with the purer part of my nature, I found at last consolation; and I almost thought, sometimes, when soothed and elevated I bent my knee on the green sod, that some blessed spirit glided noiselessly to my side and breathed around that early grave, an atmosphere of hope and peace.

CHAPTER XLVII

THE revolving year had again brought us winter. Giorani was still in Spain. I had written him all that had occurred, and received in return many letters full of that earnest, purified affection which is the exalted portion of love. I wrote now to tell him that our long, painful separation might cease.

Francisca returned to us early in the summer, and I soon discovered an extraordinary change in her. She who at the best had not been to me anything more than polite now courted my society with a manner of cordial and unvarying interest. Had I better understood human nature I should have distrusted this sudden change, but as it was I at first attributed it to a wayward fancy, and then, finding her continue kind and consistent, wondered and rejoiced, and at length yielded the love and confidence I had ever desired to be able to bestow on her.

After having written to Giorani to return, I asked myself in the greatest perplexity what I should tell Francisca when he arrived, and above all what I should tell her when the time came for our marriage. Disdaining falsehood there remained to me but one course—to frankly confess the past to her without reservation. I determined to do so, as soon as I heard from him, and waited anxiously for a letter. Ah, vainly I waited; many long weeks went, and I wrote again, and then again; still no answer. I concluded that he must be ill; in no other way could his neglect be explained.

Love conquered my pride, and I continued to write to him frequently, but April found the blossoms opening over Estelle's grave, and yet not one line from him.

The wretched sick-heartedness of disappointment fell upon me, and the stoical endurance with which I had borne so many great sorrows began to depart. Of what use was my fortitude, my faith in virtue and my trust in God; all amounted to nothing in the end; but doubtless I was born to be always unhappy.

At ten o'clock one night, I went to my room, weary and sad, (since Estelle's death I occupied apartments in another part of the villa,) purposing to go at once to bed. But, leaning on the toilet table, I sank into so deep a reverie that I forgot to ring for Nina. Suddenly the door opened and I saw Francisca's face reflected in the mirror.

"Ah! you are going to bed, Irene," she said, "I will not interrupt you."

"Oh, no, Francisca, it is early, come in."

"She entered and approached me. I pushed a large arm chair toward her, and asked her to be seated.

"No, I thank you," she said, "I will follow your example and stand here."

She rested her arms on the table, and playing with a perfume bottle, said,

"I am going to announce some news to you, Irene."

"Good, I hope, Francisca."

She slightly shrugged her shoulders, and replied.

"I cannot tell, that remains to be seen. I am going to be married."

I was greatly surprised, and felt interested in a moment.

"It is very sudden, is it not Francisca?" And when is it to be?"

"I have not yet appointed the time: in a few months, I

suppose. You know I am not like the generality of Italian girls, who have no will of their own in these matters. I have English blood, which makes me independent, I think, and more especially now that there are none who have a legitimate right to control me."

I wondered whom she was to marry, but I would not ask as I did not wish to know more than she chose to confide. I unbound my hair and negligently commenced combing it. There was a momentary silence, and then she said,

"Speaking of marriage reminds me—do you remember Signor Cellini, a gentleman who was on a visit here, the second month after your arrival?"

What a question! Involuntarily I started, and hastily averting my face, answered that I remembered quite well.

"And do you know," continued she, regarding me with a furtive but piercing glance, "that he and I were betrothed then, and had been so for four years, and that after he was called away it was my father who so earnestly desired our marriage who bade me for the first time in an arbitrary manner, never to think of him as a lover?"

What was she aiming at? My face flushed, and my heart fluttered with a vague anticipation of impending evil, as I replied in a low voice that I knew all this.

"Ah!" she went on rapidly and with a kind of smothered vehemence, "I did believe that he loved me—I did believe that he would return and claim me for his bride—*mark, I did not love him*—but I might, yes, I might have loved him had he desired it. *You* do not know him; *you* cannot understand what a power of fascination he possesses. It must indeed be great when, cold, unimpressible as I am called, I still remember him. This morning I received this letter (and she drew it from her bosom) from an intimate female friend in Turin, in which she tells me that three

months since, Giorani Cellini returned there and a month ago married a beautiful young girl, noble and rich. Though so long a time has passed since I have seen him ; though I am going to be married myself ; though *I do not love him, yet I envy her.*"

Vivid crimson glowed upon her cheeks. She had, evidently, spoken in great excitement and more to herself than to me. And I, oh heaven ! the last words had fallen on my ears like my own death knell. Pale and cold, I cried with a look and tone that would have betrayed me, had she not been mentally blind and deaf,

"Married ! married ! Impossible !"

"And why impossible ? If he ever had the least love for me, it has died long since, or else he would have sought me when I became free to love him. See here what she writes."

Her finger guided me and I read,

"Something that I think will more particularly interest you, my dear Francisca, is the marriage of your old lover, Signor Cellini, he whom I supposed would long ago have brought you to live among us—it was your fault, wicked one, that he did not. After an absence of two years he returned to Turin, early in the winter, but lived in great seclusion till a month since, when he married the beautiful and rich young Countess de Bernine."

I pressed back tears and groans into the inmost recesses of my soul. Even in that dreadful moment, pride enabled me to conceal my abandonment and humiliation. Pale, cold and silent, I stood as if, like the fabled Niobe, anguish had frozen me into stone.

Francisca folded the letter and replaced it in her bosom.

"Well," she said, with a forced and bitter laugh, "I doubt not that I shall be happier with the man I am to wed than I should have been with Cellini ; such brilliant and refined men inspire undying love, while they themselves are only capable of ephemeral passions."

Some other time, if you desire it, I will tell you all about the person who has at least the merit of truly loving me. It is late now and I am keeping you up. Good night.

She went quickly from the room, without observing that I made no reply.

All that night I never closed my burning eyes. When the sun rose I laid my throbbing head on my pillow and fell into an uneasy slumber. After that I remember nothing for many days. They told me that I awoke delirious with an attack of brain fever which, though not of as long duration as the first, was equally violent.

Before I was able to leave my sick-bed, I formed my resolutions for the future, and communicated them to Signora Cornelli.

"My good aunt," I said—thus I always addressed her now—"I am weary of society and intend to leave it, at least for a time. I wish to retire to the sacred privacy of some convent, but not in Florence. The moment I feel sufficiently strong, I shall send for Count Foresti and request him to accompany me to some other city in Italy, Naples, I think, and place me in some convent."

"My child," she answered, uplifting her eyes and devoutly crossing herself, "If I could believe that this bed of illness had brought you to a knowledge of the truths of our holy religion, and perhaps, determined you to consecrate your life to Almighty God, after being convinced of the vanity of all earthly things; if I could believe this, then truly I should rejoice."

"Dear aunt," I said, "do not trouble yourself about my religion, that is a matter which refers exclusively to onesself. Your virtues are sure to secure you happiness both here and hereafter, and for my part I believe in my Creator and in virtue."

"I know that you are very good, Irene, but"——

"Ah, please, do not scold me now," I said, trying to smile, "you know I am not well."

"Yes, yes ; I forgot ; we must be quiet."

And relinquishing the lecture through fear for my health, she smoothed my pillow, drew the light curtains and moved away.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

IN a few days I wrote to the Count, and he came immediately. It was evening and I received him in my dressing-room. After he had expressed his joy at my recovery, he said, in his plain, straightforward manner,

"Now, my dear invalid, what is it that you desire to see me so particularly about?"

I told him in a few words.

"Is it possible that you are serious?" he said in astonishment.

"Asuredly, I am."

"But you must allow me to reason with you upon this subject; you are aggravating matters. It is true you have had great sorrows, but who is there in the world that has not experienced them? New affections will replace those which you have lost; do not think that you have wasted life at twenty-two."

I sadly shook my head, and replied,

"Life has lost all its attractions for me, Count, it is now only a burden, which I endure."

"Pardon me, but this is being very unreasonable. You have youth, health, intellect, and beauty, the most precious gifts of nature, and in addition to them, you possess the great advantages of wealth, and fine social position. Do you count all these nothing? Have patience a little while, till time calm your grief, and then go into society, and you may

become its queen. Turn your attention to literature or the arts, and who can prophecy what you may accomplish; come my child, reflect; do not renounce from an impulse all the blessings which providence has bestowed on you."

I listened unmoved, and firmly replied,

"I thank you, my friend, for your kind interest, but I am not acting from an impulse, I have weighed everything, and cannot change my resolve."

"Well," he said, sighing, "if you are bent on it I am ready to do anything I can to serve you. You wish to leave Florence, where do you desire to go?"

"I have thought of Naples."

"Very well, and who is to attend to your property in your absence?"

"I wished to intrust it to you."

"Blindly, I suppose. Ah! Countess, the weakness of too ingenuous a nature is over-confidence; however, this time I think you have not misplaced your trust, and I accept it. When will you be prepared to start?"

I told him in two or three days, and then, seeing that I was fatigued with the conversation, he left.

Francisca had at first affected to believe that I was not in earnest, but when she saw me making arrangements for departure, she expressed the greatest regret, and strove to make me relinquish my determination, and though she could not influence, I was moved, and very grateful.

I have spoken very little of Celeste. In three years she had grown into a tall girl, but her face preserved its infantile loveliness, and her character its gentleness. I had striven in every way to act as mother toward her; I loved her almost as my own child, and she was devotedly attached to me.

The day before I left she entered my room, and approached me, weeping violently.

"What is the matter, Celeste?" I asked, anxiously.

"Oh! dear mamma," she said, "why are you going away? What shall I do without you? If you loved me you would not go."

I seated her on my knee, and smoothing the bright hair that reminded me of the lost one, I said gently,

"My Celeste, you have a good aunt and sister, who dearly love you. In a few years you will be a young lady; pretty, accomplished, and good, and you will have a large fortune. I think that everything will smile upon you, and fervently hope it may, but if by any chance it should not be so, if you should need my love and protection, I will come to you, Celeste, even should my hair have grown grey in the convent. At present, while there are others bound to you by nearer ties, you do not need me."

Poor child, my words did not console her; she kissed me and went away still weeping.

The next morning the carriage was before the gate, and all the household, except Francisca—who could not be found—were assembled to bid me adieu. The servants looked sad. Signora Cornelli blessed me, and said,

"You must write us all about yourself—my dear Irene. I shall not cease to pray for you."

"And you must write me everything about Celeste," I said, returning the child's fond embrace. Then the Count, endeavoring to smile, hurried me to the carriage, put me in and seated himself beside me, and we slowly descended the hill, which three years before I had ascended, for the first time, with Claudius by my side.

* * * * *

Long months have passed in this lonely cell. At first bitter, and despairing, but you, kind mother, have comforted me, and I have grown calmer, and more resigned

There is a kind of strange melancholy pleasure in this profound silence, and in watching the dark figures that glide noiselessly through the corridors, or wander in the grounds, bending over some devotional book, ever contemplating the grave.

From my window I gaze on the pure sky, and adore *my* God, the *God* of nature, and recognize the truth that *all* things move beneath His supreme hand.

Francisca has never written to me, but I heard frequently from Signora, and the Count. The latter earnestly begs me to return to society—but no, no, I have neither duties nor inclinations to call me back. Here let me remain, far from the bustle of life in which I can have no share.

* * * * *

It is midnight, for two hours I have been sitting here, holding my pen, so overpowered by an entire revulsion of feeling, so wrapt in happy thought, that I have forgotten to write. I look at the letter lying open before me, to assure myself that I have not been dreaming. Ah! it was not astonishing that when these lines first met my eyes sudden joy deprived me of my senses.

“I come, Irene, to pray that I may once more behold you, that I may hear your own lips pronounce our separation. Do not refuse me an interview, I entreat you. Ever your own GIORANI.

Animated by hope I hastened to the reception room, but at sight of him a mist obscured my vision, my heart beat wildly; I stopped and leaned against the door, silent, and with downcast eyes.

He came quickly to me, and gently taking my hand, said in a low tone of suppressed agitation,

“Oh! what happiness to see you again, even thus, Irene,—even thus.”

He heaved a long sigh, and continued,

“Your coming gives me a little hope. Look at this, and

tell me if you wrote it, and if so, if it is still your determination."

He put a note in my hand, and I glanced rapidly over it. Thus it ran.

"Think of me no more, Giorani; if we ever meet again it must be as strangers; do not seek me, do not ask explanation, it is enough that this is my irrevocable decision.

May 20, 13—.

IRENE DE GIOLAMO.

A light broke in upon me.

"I see it all now," I said, "how could I be so blind? Giorani, my hand-writing has been skilfully imitated, I never wrote this, I have never seen it before."

"Ah! is it possible!" he exclaimed, rapturously. "The Count was right; there has been base treachery at work."

"And you, Giorani," I said, looking fearlessly in his face, now, "you are not married?"

"Married! you believed me so? No, my Irene, only my soul is wedded, and that to you."

His arm stole round me, and my head sank on his shoulder. Involuntarily my thoughts sought the Divine Spirit of Love that blessed me, and I am sure that none but holy feelings moved our hearts, beating against each other.

We sat down, side by side at last, and I related everything to him. When I had finished, he said,

"The letter in which you bade me come to Florence never reached me. The last I received was dated December 21. After this I endured the torture of suspense for a month, and then resolved to proceed at once to Florence, and ascertain the reason of your silence, but on the eve of my departure I was prostrated by a malignant fever, which very nearly proved fatal, and it was not till May that I was able to travel; I arrived in Florence on the eighteenth, and burning with impatience to hear something of you, hastened to Count Foresti. I was greatly disappointed to find that

he had gone to Naples, to be absent several days. There was but one thing that I could do—to write to you. I did so, asking you in honor and justice, to declare to me your intentions. A servant from the villa brought me this note in reply. Your hand was so well imitated, and all the previous circumstances so entirely agreed with it—how was it possible for me to suspect a forgery. Filled with grief and indignation, I went immediately to Turin. To lose faith in you was to become a universal skeptic; I did not desire, therefore, that any other image might replace yours, I only wished to forget you, but the sweet charm of your love could not easily pass from memory. The loveliest of Italy's daughters might smile upon me, and their low dulcet tones murmur in my ear, but a form of ethereal grace, lovelier than all, haunted my thoughts, and a voice of melancholy music spoke to me in the brilliant throng, and in the still hour of solitude.

Many months elapsed, and still I was unhappy. Prompted by an inexplicable impulse, I returned to Florence, sought Count Foresti and told him all. The good old man was amazed.

'This cold, heartless conduct is not in the least reconcilable with the frank, honorable and consistent character of the Countess,' he said, 'and besides, at the very time that you received this note she was in Naples with me. Early in the spring she was dangerously ill, and on her recovery told me very emphatically that she desired to leave society, and begged that I would accompany her to Naples, and place her in a convent there. After having endeavored to dissuade her, but without success, I complied with her wish. God forbid that I should wrong the daughter of my old friend, but I really think Francisca capable of almost anything to gratify her vindictiveness. In my opinion

the most probable explanation of the affair is that she discovered your love by some accident, and hating Irene for having robbed her of your affections, intercepted your letters, invented some falsehood which drove Irene to despair, and, to crown all, forged this note, to deprive you of all hope, and separate you from her forever. 'Go to the Countess—go at once; this is the only means by which you may arrive at the truth.'

I took his advice; I am here—and am I not happy?"

"Ah! how much misery she has caused; but we were imprudent, Giorani. Do you remember, at Geneva, the face you saw against the window? doubtless it was her; and more than this, a few days previous I inadvertently placed in her possession your letter to Claudius, declining her hand."

"It is all passed now; what a blessed thought. To-morrow you will quit this sad abode, and henceforth our paths lie together, is it not a sweet one?"

Trustingly, I laid my hands in his, and said,

"Surely—surely the love that has survived such severe tests will be immortal. Where in this world should I seek a soul as noble as yours, my Giorani?"

"May a free perfect love ever unite us," he said, and then bade me a fond adieu till the morrow.

At last happiness is within my grasp. Happiness that calmed by the recollection of past grief does not shine with the fresh, resplendent light of life's earliest morn, but glows with the softened and tender radiance of the sunset heaven when in its depth trembles the glorious star of eve. So let us walk onward into the illimitable future.

THE END.

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